COMIC SHOP NEWS
COLLECTOR'S GUIDE

No. 1

A 95¢ VALUE!

THE SPIRIT: MONTHLY from KITCHEN SINK!

"I'LL BE BACK. . ."

THE TERMINATOR, 1984

A NEW FULL-COLOR MONTHLY SERIES

COMING THIS JUNE

TERMINATOR is copyright 1984 HEMDALE FILM CORP. All Rights Reserved.

Introduction

If you're just now becoming a comic book collector, you're about to discover one of the most interesting of all collecting hobbies. There are thousands upon thousands of comics collectors all over the world who share your interest in comics with you, people who share your enthusiasm for comic books as a form of entertainment and as a collectible hobby.

Collecting comics has obvious advantage over collecting stamps or coins, the only two collectible hobbies with more enthusiasts that comic book collecting. With stamps or coins, virtually all you can do is collect; you can't read your stamps or your coin and enjoy them, you can simply look at them, keep them organized, and file them away.

With comic books, you have a world of enjoyment in your collectible hobby. You can read and reread the comic books you collect and enjoy them each and every time.

This ***Collectors' Guide*** is set up to help the beginning collector and the novice collector; we've also included valuable interviews and articles about today's comics companies so that even the veteran collector will gain something from the ***CSN Collector's Guide.***

The first segment of the book will give a little background on comics collecting, along with some tips about how to collect, how to organize your collection, how to grade your collection, etc.

There are a lot of you who are just now getting into the fascinating hobby of comics collecting, and we're hoping this Guide makes it easy for you to become a collector.

The second segment of the book will update you on just what the various comic book companies are doing and on what you should look for in your collection. We'll also give you a little background history on most of the major companies in the field, just to let you put everything in perspective.

Your local comics shop--the place where you picked up this ***CSN Collectors' Guide***--is your best collecting resource, of course. They made this Guide available to you because they have a genuine interest in comics and in collecting, so if you have any questions--or if you feel so motivated after reading all this that you're ready to venture into the world of comics collecting--talk to the people at your local comics shop--and be sure to mention the CSN ***Guide!***

Another valuable resource to you as a comics collector is ***Comic Shop News; CSN*** is the largest-circulation ongoing comics news publication in the field, and it's available only through comics specialty shops like the one where you got this ***Guide.*** Each week, we bring the you latest in news from the field, spotlights on major new projects, reviews of upcoming works, interviews with some of the industry's most talented and fascinating professionals, and a checklist of books you can expect to see in your comics shop for the next few weeks. If your local shop is running out before you can get your copy of ***Comic Shop News***, be sure to let them know--we don't want anyone to do without!

Now, on to the ***Guide.*** Happy Collecting!

– Cliff Biggers & Ward Batty –

Contents

Cover .....by Will Eisner
Glossary 4
Tips on Collecting 6
Grading 8
History 12
Marvel 14
DC 18
Eclipse 20
First 23
Kitchen Sink 26
NOW 28
Starblaze 30
Eternity 32
Dark Horse 34
Gladstone 37
Comico 38
Blackthorne 41
Independents 43

Comic Shop News Collector's Guide #1 is published annually by Paragraphics, 1353 Gray Rock Dr., Marietta, GA 30066. (404) 924-9369. Contents © 1988 Paragraphics. Copyright on all artwork reverts back to the artist and/or publisher.

Glossary

A problem with any new hobby is learning the proper terminology; comics collectors have several unique terms that are a part of the hobby. Let's look at some of the terms you're likely to find used in the field of comics collecting, and explain just what they are.

Adaptation: A comic based on someone else's work; very often, an adaptation is a comic book version of another writer's novel, film, poem, opera, etc.

Anthology: An anthology is a comic book that contains several different unrelated stories, usually by different creative teams.

Ashcan Edition: Originally, this was a sample copy prepared for office use but never intended to be sold. Nowadays, several publishers use the term to refer to a very small run of a comic, usually xeroxed, that is privately distributed to friends, reviewers, etc. In some cases, an ashcan edition is also a signed limited edition.

B&W - Black and White, a popular printing method for many comics from a variety of independent publishers. Most B&W titles do still have color covers, however.

Baxter Book: A comic printed on higher-quality paper which is stiffer, whiter, and holds ink better than the mediocre newsprint used on so many comics. A Baxter Book usually has higher production values--better printing plates, stronger colors, more detail--than a regular comic.

Bookshelf Format - Marvel's name for the squarebound, heavy-paper, high quality format that originated with ***Dark Knight*** from DC.

Colorist: The person who adds the color to the comic art, working from photostats (that's why the original artwork is still in black-and-white). It's not as easy a job to color a comic as you might think; see Four-Color for more details.

Comics Code Authority: An industry regulation group created in the 1950's to make sure that comics adhered to a very strict code of morals and values--this came about largely because of fears of industry regulation due to the uproar caused by an "expose" of comics entitled Seduction of the Innocent. The CCA, or the Code, has become significantly more permissive in recent years, and has significantly less clout than it once did. You may still find their stamp of approval on the cover of many comics, however.

Continuity: Making the events of a comic fit in with the events of other issues of the comic; making sure that characters, backgrounds, settings, etc., are consistent (just as they would be in the real world). Many fans are very aware of continuity, and spend a lot of time looking for comics stories that seem to violate continuity. The older a title is, the more continuity it has--and the more likely an author will either intentionally or accidentally violate that continuity if he doesn't have a perfect memory of everything that's happened in that character's adventures before.

Crossover: A story that features characters from another title appearing as guest-stars. Some crossovers are just guest-starring appearances, while some of them actually begin in one book and continue into another.

Dark Knight Format: Prestige Format or Bookshelf Format; the squarebound, high-quality format first used by DC for ***Dark Knight*** #1.

Deluxe Format: The same as Bookshelf Format or Prestige Format or Dark Knight Format--my, this industry loves names, doesn't it?

Direct Distribution: Comics that are sold directly to specialty distributors for resale to specialty shops, which sell those books to fans who are tired of haunting the local convenience stores. This system is "direct" because the unsold books cannot be returned by the stores if they aren't sold, making it a direct sale for the publisher; also, this system tends to leave out some middleman steps, getting the books to your comics specialty shop very quickly. Phil Seuling is generally credited with creating the framework for today's direct market--a market that makes it possible for you to read this CSN Collector's Guide, among other things.

Duotone: Black plus one other color, used as an accent color. ***Ms. Tree*** is the best-known title regularly using duotone.

Fair: See our comics grading guide elsewhere in this issue for more information; basically, this is a book showing a fair amount of wear, but still readable and complete.

Fanzine: A fan magazine; this is where a lot of today's pros got their early starts. Usually, fanzines are not comics, but are about comics.

Fill-in: An issue of a book done by some creative team other than the regular team; also, an issue of a comic book that does not fit in to regular story continuity. Many companies keep fill-in stories on hand just in case someone misses a deadline and doesn't finish an issue of a comic book in time.

Fine: See our Comics Grading Guide for more information; this is a book that is in very desirable condition, but having slight signs of wear.

First Printing: The original edition of a comic book. Some successful titles are reprinted, but the first printing is the most desirable.

Five-Star Format: Eclipse's format the uses Baxter-quality interiors with heavy cardstock covers.

Flaking: A problem with some older comics, particularly early Marvels; small pieces of the outer edge of the cover tend to chip or flake off. This can also happen to older books that have turned brittle with age.

Flexograph: A printing method that uses flexible printing plates rather than the more rigid plastic or metal plates; it's rumored that Flexograph printing was originally used for grocery store bags, and some wits claim that the printing quality looks like it. Flexograph books tend to be blobby and have less detail than standard comics.

Fortnightly: Published every two weeks; some publishers use this to mean published twice a month, but there really is a difference--about two issues a year worth.

Four-color: The way most comics are printed. Virtually every color you see on a comic book page is a combination of only four colors of ink: yellow, red, blue, and black. When all you can work with is the basic four plus a limited number of combinations, you have to be pretty imaginative--that's why colorists are in such demand in the comics field. Occasionally, a publisher will use an extra color of ink: ***Green Lantern/Green Arrow*** #1, from DC, used silver ink on its first issue, for example.

Golden Age: The first great period of comics, usually considered to run from 1938 to the last year or so of the 1940's.

Glossary

Good: See our Comics Grading Guide in this issue for more information; this is acceptable condition, showing a moderate amount of wear, but still solid and complete.

Graphic Album: a larger book presenting several comic-format stories in one collection. These may be individual stories, or they may be one long story. Usually, a graphic album has higher production values than a comic book.

Graphic Novel: a full-length story printed in graphic album format; usually a graphic novel is an original story, whereas graphic albums are often reprintings. Since many publishers use these terms interchangeably, though, you have our permission to be confused.

HC: Hardcover, usually clothbound (but not always--sometimes hardcover books use pressed cardboard covers with coated paper binding, while some deluxe books are actually leatherbound).

Hardcover/Softcover: A plan DC implemented in the mid-1980's that released some books in Baxter format initially, then reprinted them a year later in a cheaper format. This was done in imitation of the tendency of popular best-sellers to be published in expensive hardcover to begin with, then to be offered in inexpensive paperback editions later on.

Hudson Paper: A very glossy coated stock of paper used by Marvel for Marvel Fanfare. Books done this way are sometimes called Hudson Books.

ID: Books that are distributed through the non-specialty distribution system just like most magazines; ID copies often have a UPC code (that pattern of lines found in the lower left-hand corner of comics and on the back of virtually every grocery item in the known universe). These books usually go on sale later than the comics you find in your friendly neighborhood comics shop.

Illustrated Novel: A text novel that has a number of illustrations; this is not a comic book, although often comic illustrators are used to do the art for illustrated novels.

Independent: a comics company that does not distribute its books via the ID system, but relies on the comics specialty market direct distribution system or some other alternative system.

Inker: the person who finishes the pencilled artwork, often adding details, background, and other elements to the work; virtually every inker has his own style, and different inkers can give the same penciller's work a very different style.

Issue: the number of a comic book, usually found on the front cover.

Layouts: Basic page designs, done in rough pencilled format by aneaves the finished pencils to someone else.

Letterer: This is the person who adds the word balloons, complete with dialogue, and the sound effects to a comic book. It's nowhere nearly as easy as some people think--and nothing can ruin an otherwise-good-looking com quicker than bad lettering.

Limited Edition: A book with a set number of copies available; in some cases, each copy is numbered, making it a numbered limited edition; in some cases, each copy is signed by one or more creators, making it a signed limited edition. Because the number of available copies is limited, a limited edition usually sells for more money, sells out quickly, and increases in value.

Limited Series: a comic book series with a pre-determined number of issues; if it's six-issues or less, it's often called a mini-series, whereas eight, ten, or twelve issue limited series are often called maxi-series. Prior to this decade, books with four or six issues were usually called failures.

Mando Paper: A slightly whiter grade of newsprint used on some comics. Mando paper usually makes the colors more bright and holds the ink a little bit better than newsprint.

Manga: Japanese comics; thanks to First and Eclipse, American comics fans now have the opportunity to read several Japanese manga very regularly. Other comics have begun offering these reprintings of Japanese comics as well. Manga tend to have less action per 32-page issue than American comics, but that's because the Japanese don't think in terms of 32 page issues; their comics tend to be much longer than American books.

Maxi-Series: See Limited Series.

Mini-Series: See Limited Series.

Mint: A perfect condition comic book; a mint book looks like it just came off the stands--sometimes even better, since many of the books you find on the stands aren't really mint. (See the Comics Grading Guide for more information).

Mylar: A very inert plastic compound used for some comics bags; mylar doesn't yellow and is more stable than most plastics--but it also costs more.

Near-Mint: Almost perfect condition, with only the most minor and insignificant of defects (see the Comics Grading Guide for more info).

Newsprint: the standard pulp-based paper that most major comics companies print their books on; newsprint yellows quickly, is fairly porous, and often turns brittle with age--but remember, when the publishers first started doing comics on this stuff, they really didn't think we'd all be collecting this stuff years later.

One-Shot: A single-issue title; the shortest mini-series of all.

Original Art: The actual pieces of art done by the penciller and inker that are used to reproduce te comic book. Many collectors like to own pieces of original art from their favorite comics--and many comics artists make their art available for sale for just this reason.

Penciller: The creator who does the pencilled illustrations for the comic book, which he may render in ink himself or he may turn over to another person to ink.

Plotter: The creator who comes up with the basic plot idea--but not the finished dialogue.

Poor: Not really collectible at all, this is a very worn and damaged copy of a book that is complete--but that's about all you can say for it. See the Comics Grading Guide for more information.

Portfolio: A collection of several higher-quality art prints offered as works of art; most portfolios are full-page illustrations, usually offering higher-quality artwork and better printing quality. Some portfolios are signed or numbered.

Poster: a mass-produced larger drawing, usually sold at a fairly low

Glossary

price. Don't confuse a poster with a print.

Prestige Format: Another name for the Dark Knight format; why can't these guys agree?

Print: A higher-quality art reproduction, usually sold individually. Prints are done on better paper than posters, using better printing methods, and as a result generally cost more. Some less-than-scrupulous publishers use the term "print" when they mean "poster," though.

Scripter: The creator who writes the more detailed story and dialogue for a comic based on someone else's plot idea.

Silver Age: The renaissance of comics, generally considered to begin around 1958 and last until the late 1960's. This is the time when superheroes returned to a predominant position in the comics universe.

Sparta: The city where World Color is located; this is the company that prints most of the major company's comics, and these newsprint books are often called "Sparta books."

Specialty Shop: A comics shop like the one where you got this ***CSN Collector's Guide;*** a specialty shop offers a wide range of comics and comics-related items that you can't find anywhere else.

Speculation: Buying comic books for investment purposes rather than for enjoyment; speculators are hoping they can guess what will be popular before everyone else decides they like it.
Done right, speculation can be very profitable; done wrong, it can be very expensive.

Spine: The left-hand edge of a comic book, where the pages are joined together. Some spines are wraparound, meaning they consist of larger sheets folded in half and stapled, while some are square-bound, meaning they consist of smaller groups of pages glued or stapled together to form a square edge.

Spine Roll: a problem often caused by folding comics back as you read each page; The back of the spine tends to curl forward to the front of the book, making the pages no longer line up properly and causing excessive spine wear.

Tie-Ins: Books that contain stories that relate in some way to another series or story.

Trade Paperback: a larger paperback edition of a comic or a comics series, usually a reprint volume; some publishers use trade paperback as a synonym for graphic album, while others use it to mean a reprint volume that collects more pages than an average graphic album. No one said all these terms were always specific...

Undergrounds: Comics published by alternative smaller publishers that often deal with drugs, sex, politics, religion, or counter-culture subjects. These were very popular in the 1960's, but there are virtually no undergrounds published today.

UPC Box: See ID.

Writer: The person who plots and scripts a comic book.

Tips On Collecting

HOW TO COLLECT

Collecting is very simple to get into; all you have to do is save the books you buy and try to keep them in the best possible condition. If you're doing that, you're a collector, whether you thought of it that way or not.

A lot of people think collectors are readers who spend hundreds or thousands of dollars acquiring back issues to fill in holes in their collections. That's not necessarily the case. While some collectors try to get all the issues of a particular title, paying hundreds or thousands of dollars for rare books, some collectors maintain a very tight budget and never pay more than $5 or $10 for any book in their collections. Some collectors don't buy back issues at all, preferring instead just to collect new books they can buy at their local comics shop.

THE BASICS

If you're going to collect, you need to decide what it is you want to collect. That sounds simpler than it is, because you need to be realistic about your budget if you want to enjoy your collection without driving yourself broke in the process.

Most collectors prefer to collect by title; that is, they collect one particular title (like ***X-Men*** or ***Justice League International*** or ***Spirit***) and try to get every issue of that title, plus any annuals, special issues, or graphic novels that are published under that title. This way, you're sure you're getting a book you'll enjoy.

Some collectors go further and collect by character; they might not only buy every ***Airboy*** comic published under that title, they might also make a point of getting every book that ***Airboy*** appears in. Again, you're reading material about a character you like, so you're probably going to enjoy your collection--and you might get exposed to some other titles you might enjoy in the process, if they happen to have crossovers with the character you collect.

Some people collect by ***artist or writer;*** that is, they might buy every book that Steve Rude draws, or every book that Mark Evanier writes. This is particularly intriguing for the collector who enjoys the art of comics as much or more than the characters themselves; it allows a collector to see how a creator has developed over the years, and exposes the collector to a variety of characters and concepts that the creator has done.

A few collectors try to collect all the books of a particular company; unless you choose a very small company, this can get very expensive very quickly. Also, remember that "company identity" means a lot less than it did a decade or two ago; the same creators whose work you enjoy at Eternity may also be working for Eclipse, Fantagraphics, or Blackthorne at the same time, and you might miss out on some material you'd really like just because it didn't have the right corporate name on the cover.

A few collectors make a point of collecting every first issue published. Again, this can get ***very*** expensive. Furthermore, while the idea is a noble one--it will expose you to every book being published, and you will know what

Tips On Collecting

everyone is doing--it can also fill your collection with a lot of books you don't enjoy while burdening your budget. If you can afford it, buying all first issues is fine; if you're having to live within your means like most of us, though, you might ask the friendly folks at your comics shop to help you decide what first issues are likely to appeal to you and what first issues aren't. They keep up with what's being published, and if you can tell them what you like, they can help you find new books that are likely to match your interests.

Some collectors specialize in a time period, collecting all books from a particular decade. Some collectors specialize in certain genres of books, collecting all horror books or all westerns or all 3-D books.

What do you want to do? If you enjoy reading about your favorite characters, you'll probably want to collect by titles or characters. If you want to follow an artist or writer, collect that way. But remember one thing--a collection has to be something you enjoy. If you're buying a lot of material you don't like, the odds are much higher that the people you hope to sell your collection to later on won't like it, either.

COLLECTING FOR INVESTMENT

Comics certainly make great investments, there's no denying that. We've all heard stories of the collector who sold his first issue of ***Captain Zippybash*** for $5000 dollars, or the collector who traded his collection for a place on the beach in Malibu. Remember, though, that deals like that make the news because they're rare. If every collector sold his collection for megabucks, you wouldn't hear about it because it wouldn't be news.

This is a ***Comic Shop News Collectors' Guide,*** not an Investors' Guide; we're not going to tell you that you should buy multiple copies of books, that you should invest heavily in appreciating back issues, or that you should buy things you don't like because they're likely to be expensive later on.

We spend a lot of time telling you what's hot in this ***Guide***; there's a reason for that. If a book is hot, that means that a lot of people collecting comics are enjoying it enough to buy it. If all those thousands upon thousands of collectors are enjoying a title (thereby making it hot), the odds are greater that you'll enjoy it as well. These are not books that we think are necessarily great investments for maximum dollar return in minimum time--but they are books you're likely to enjoy reading, and they're books that are likely to have an avid following.

Remember the basic rule of investing: you're trying to buy at a cheap price something that someone else will want badly enough to pay a high price for later on. That someone else is probably not going to be your comics shop; the shop is in the comics business, and if a book is truly likely to be valuable a few months down the line, the comics shop will probably be more aware of it than you are, and they're probably ***already*** backstocking copies of it.

If you ***have*** to invest, then you might ask your local shop owner what books he or she is backstocking heavily. These are books the shop is willing to risk its own money on, so you can use that as a guide.

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

You've decided that you're going to collect, and you know what you're going to collect. Now, let's talk about how to collect it.

Simple. You buy what you need to fill in your collection.

That's all we'd have to tell you if everyone was independently wealthy. If you're still reading this, we assume you aren't wealthy, so we'll give you a few tips on how to fill out your collection.

RULE #1: Never pass up cover-price new comics to buy back issues. Never ever. Remember, once that book you passed up at cover price sells out, you'll be paying back-issue prices for it. Many books jump in price by 50%-100% as soon as they're no longer available as new books--then they don't increase in value again for a long, long time. If you pass on a cover-price ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*** to buy last month's issue at $2.50, there's a chance that the next time you go into your local comics shop, they'll be sold out of the Turtles (after all, we all know how hot that book is) and will only have it at $2.50--while the last month's issue is probably still selling for $2.50.

Of course, there can be exceptions here--if you find a back issue at such a bargain price that you know it won't be there next week, or if it's a book you've been wanting forever, then go ahead. But a wise collector tries to budget enough for new comics and for back issues.

RULE TWO: Make a back issue plan and stick with it.

Don't buy back issues at random unless a title is new enough that there aren't that many back issues to buy. Many collectors try to work in 20-issue lumps, trying to fill in 20 issues back from their oldest issue. If you have all the issues of ***Cerebus*** from 80 on up and you were using this system, you'd try to buy any reasonably-priced ***Cerebus*** issues you find between 60 and 80. If you collect this way, you're more likely to understand what's happening in the comics you've bought, and you're also more likely to find the books you want. Each 20-issue-increment will get harder to find than the 20-issue-increment before it, but it'll be gradual. Also, you tend to fill in holes in your collection with less expensive books first, then you buy the more expensive ones later on, when you might have more money. (For most folks, income increases with age...)

Some collectors prefer to do just the opposite; they try to buy the early issues first, then work their way up. Even then, they find it best to work in 20-issue increments; that way, they get entire stories that they can actually read and enjoy.

RULE THREE: If a bargain hits you in the head, forget rule one and two.

Let's be honest here; any plan has to be flexible. If you find a first printing of ***Elfquest #1*** for a buck or two and you pass it up because you're only collecting the last ten issues of ***Elfquest*** right now, you need to rethink your collecting policy. A bargain isn't likely to be there forever, so grab it while you can.

RULE FOUR: Evaluate your collection periodically.

Last month, it would have cost you over $800 to buy one copy of every comic, graphic novel, and trade paperback published. Most people can't afford that. That's why you limit your collection in some way.

There are a lot of good books competing for your collecting dollar. If you keep buying books you no longer enjoy, you may be missing some great stuff being published out there. Remember with $800 worth of stuff a month being published, there's probably some great comics that you'd love--if you just had the money to try them.

Periodically, look over what you're collecting. If you're not enjoying those titles as much as you used to, start looking at the comics racks and see if there's something else there that you might enjoy more. A collection isn't a lifetime commitment--if you're getting tired of a book, drop it for a while and try something else.

Tips On Collecting

RULE FIVE: If you aren't taking care of your collection, you don't have a collection--just an accumulation.

The best way to keep your collection valuable is to take care of it. There are a few comics-collecting basic supplies here that will enable you to do just that.

First off, ***bag your collection.*** You don't have to have a single bag for every book; you can put two in a bag, back-to-back, and still see the covers to each. If you're on a real budget, then you can put runs of five or ten books in one bag--but you might want to put a label on your bag to tell you just what's there.

Why should you bag your collection? It won't stop your books from aging--but it will help to keep insects and the elements out. A number of household insect pests have an avid appetite for the exact same paper you find in comic books--but they don't seem to enjoy plastic nearly as much. The most common form of damage to comics collections is water damage--and again, the bags can help keep the water and your favorite comics from meeting one another.

Comic bags ***aren't*** airtight, however, so don't think that bagging your collection will permanently halt the aging process--it won't work.

Oddly enough, the most expensive mylar bags are, in some ways, the least protective. Most mylar bags don't seal at the top, thereby eliminating most of the pest-protection aspects of the bag. Even worse, some collectors actually damage their books on the stiff mylar bag itself.

Certainly, mylar is a more stable material than the plastic used in standard comics bags--but it's expensive and, as we've said, it can actually contribute to damage of your comics. If you want to use mylar material, mylites (thinner, flexible bags made of lighter-weight mylar) might be a good compromise.

Once you've bagged your collection, get rid of the old grocery store boxes you've been storing your books in and buy some comic book boxes from your local comics shop. Comic book boxes help you protect your collection; first, they're designed to be just wide enough for your comics, thereby reducing the damage caused by books sliding across each other in a too-wide box. Second, if you fill your box adequately, the box and the books in the box work together to support your comics, keeping them flat and cutting down on the airflow around the books.

Don't underfill a comics box; it's better to have it a little bit snug than it is to have the books so loose that the books can slump down and bend inwards due to the slack in the box.

If you don't buy a large number of comics each week, you might want to keep your collection in short (or halfsized) comics boxes; this way, it's easier for your to fill a box. If you buy large numbers of books, you may want to buy full-sized boxes--but measure the space you're going to store your collection in to make sure it's deep enough to take the full-length boxes.

KNOWING WHAT YOU HAVE

If you don't have an indexing system, you may want to develop one. It'll make it easy for you to know what you have--and it'll help you avoid buying the same books more than once.

Many comics shops sell index cards or index sheets for comics, but you can make your own index sheet easily enough. All you need is a typewriter and access to a photocopying machine.

Collectors' index cards are very handy because they're smaller, but many collectors prefer to use full-sized index pages and make out a wantlist of books they're looking for.

Now you have the basics: If you're a comics collector, you're ready to move on to the part everyone wants to read about--the comics themselves!

Grading

SO HOW MUCH IS IT WORTH?

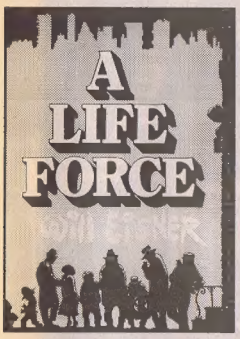
One question that all fans wonder about is "how much is this book worth?" When you're just starting to collect, the value of the books you're buying can be very important--the saying "so many books, so little money" is an all-too-true part of the beginning collector's life. (Just in case you're wondering, it's just as much a problem for the veteran collector, who finds himself craving much more expensive, harder-to-find back issues.)

Once you've decided just what it is you're going to collect, you have the problem of deciding just how much you can afford to pay. One factor that will certainly influence price is the condition of the comics you collect.

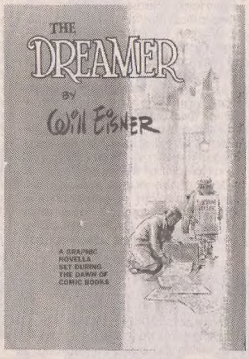
When you first started reading comics, you probably didn't bother to take care of them; they showed signs of wear at the spine, the pages got dog-eared, you may have even written your name in the book or rolled it up to put it in your pocket. When you were just buying a book to read and then throw away, all this was fine. As a collector, though, you're looking at comics totally differently.

No one wants to buy a car with a dent in it unless the price is low enough to make it worth taking the damaged car. It's the same with comic books: everyone wants comic books that are ***mint,*** or in perfect condition. In coin-collecting lingo, where we borrow the term ***"mint,"*** the word means "a coin that has just come from the mint and is uncirculated." For all intents and purposes, that is what

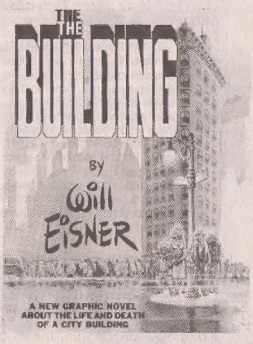
Classic Comic Art & Artists From Kitchen Sink Press



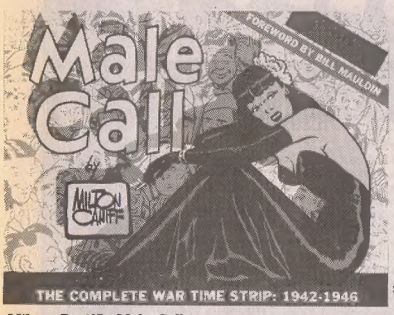
A Life Force is our latest Will Eisner novel, coming in APRIL. 144 pages. Trade paper and signed hardcover. Watch for it!



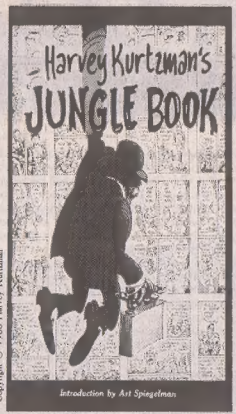
The Dreamer is Will Eisner's short novel about the birth of comic books. In trade paper and signed hardcover. One of the great ones!



The Building by Will Eisner is the story of a city structure and the lives that are psychically tied to it. In trade paper and hardcover. Warm!



Milton Caniff's *Male Call* is a reprint volume of the great cartoonist's World War II strip for servicemen. It features Miss Lace, a Foreword by Bill Mauldin, and a reminiscence by Caniff himself! A must for collectors!



Harvey Kurtzman's *Jungle Book* collects four great stories from 1959, related as only the creator of *Mad* can tell them. With a foreword by Art Spiegelman, and Kurtzman's own comments on the stories inside! Now available in softcover!

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

Many other books and comics, produced by master cartoonists young and old, are published by the House of Quality, Kitchen Sink Press. Since 1969. No. 2 Swamp Rd. • Princeton WI 54968

Grading

a mint comic is: a book that is uncirculated (virtually), in the same shape that it was in the day it went on the rack. Don't let people tell you that a book is "mint for its age." ***Mint*** is an absolute term--it means ***perfect in every way***, and the grade doesn't lower its standards for older books. That's why older books are so valuable in mint condition--it's so very, very hard to find them in that shape.

For all intents and purposes, most collectors' comics are graded between ***fine*** and ***near-mint***. ***Near-mint*** is just what it says: almost, but not quite, mint. It may show very, very slight signs of reading--but not signs of wear. It may be a little less glossy, or it may show its age a little bit.

A ***fine*** condition book shows a few signs of wear, but they have to be very minor. For the uninitiated, a fine condition book looks "like new." A comics collector will notice the little bit of wear on the spine or the outer age, a little rounding of the outside corners, etc. This is still a very, very good grade of book, and for many collectors, ***fine*** is a perfect compromise in the battle between perfect condition and cheap price.

Very good is a bit lower in grade than fine. A very good book is complete, solid, and very presentable, but it has some signs of wear. A very good book will not have any tears in the cover, missing staples, rolled spine, or writing on the cover, however.

A ***good*** book is just that: it's good, but it's not great. A good book is complete, all the pages and the cover are attached and are tight, there are no rips in the book and no pieces missing, but it's probably less glossy, showing more wear and age than a fine book. Good books are the books you often find at flea markets and relatives' attics; they've been read and they show it, but they're still complete, solid, and readable.

Fair condition books are about as low as a collector wants to go. These books are pretty rough copies. They may have some minor tears in the cover; some of the interior pages may be torn or worn (but no pages can be missing). There may even be some small pieces of the cover or outer edges of the pages missing from wear, some dirt or grime on the cover, and some obvious spine rolling, but the book is still complete and readable. This is not the kind of book you'll rush out to show your friends once you acquire it, but it will allow you to have a valuable book in your collection at a less-than-valuable price.

Poor condition books are poor, and that's all there is to it. This is the kind of book you'd think twice about owning at any price. It may have a great deal of writing on the cover or interiors; it may have large tears or holes in the book; it may have bad wear on the cover that actually obliterates segments of the cover; it may be separated at the spine. A poor condition book should have all its pages unless otherwise noted, but that's about all it has going for it.

What happens, all too often, is that a collector bases the value of his collection on the ***mint*** value of the books, but he buys only ***good*** or ***very good*** condition books. Don't fool yourself. If you want to have a collection that's very desirable, buy near-mint or better books; it will cost you a great deal, but you will have books in very collectible condition.

If you're ***not*** planning to resell your collection, however--and many fans don't, since they're collecting for enjoyment rather than investment--you may be perfectly satisfied with good or very good condition copies. Some collectors even focus on fair condition copies, which sometimes sell for as little as 10% the value of a mint-condition book. Collectors have been known to build entire runs of fair-condition books for a fraction of the cost of the more desirable runs. This is fine if you're collecting to read; if you hope to recoup your investment plus a healthy profit later on, though, you really should consider anything less than very good unacceptable.

Don't just assume that any ***new book*** you buy is necessarily a ***mint*** book, either; since comics are often shipped in string-tied bundles, in boxes, it's possible for some copies of books to show "string-wear" (creases or lines caused by the string cutting into the top or bottom copies), box damage (a staple in the box may cause a dent or puncture in the book, or the box may have been dropped on a corner, resulting in minor corner bends), or some rolling of the spine (caused by careless lifting of the bundles by the string, making the books roll inward).

There may also be printing defects in the book; the cover may be miscut, or the color may not line up perfectly. Watch for this sort of defect, also; no matter how much care you take with your collection, if the book wasn't really mint when you bought it, it never will be.

ACTION COMICS WEEKLY

GALA PREMIERE APRIL 8

FEATURING:

GREEN LANTERN

DEADMAN SECRET SIX

SUPERMAN WILD DOG

BLACKHAWK

All titles and related indicias are DC Comics trademarks of DC Comics Inc. DC Comics Inc. © 1988

History

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Comics have been praised by famous author Harlan Ellison as "one of the five uniquely American art forms." If you're interested enough in collecting to have picked up this ***CSN Collectors' Guide***, you might be interested in how comics began.

We can thank William Randolph Hearst, famous journalist and publisher, for the basic idea of comics; it was Hearst who created the idea of a book reprinting comic strips in the early 1900's. That's what the first comic books were--strip reprints. It was a while before anyone thought about collecting new stories into comic book form.

In 1933, a few special giveaway comics were published; the response for these strip reprints was so tremendous that Max Gaines decided to risk publishing a comic book for sale on the newsstands. He priced his comic book at a dime, the price of many of the popular pulp magazines of that era, and so ***Famous Funnies*** was born in 1934 from Dell Comics, the first actual comics publishing company.

DC--or the company we now know as DC--entered the comics game in 1935, when National Periodical Publications released ***New Fun #1.*** It would be two more years before DC would publish the title that gave it its DC name: ***Detective Comics.***

Walt Disney came to comics in 1935 as well, and the comics boom was underway. Before the end of the decades, many publishers who had been involved with pulp fiction were making the move to the new and fast-growing comics industry, and it seemed like there were more titles coming out every month.

In 1938, DC turned the comics industry upside down with the release of the first superhero story in ***Action Comics #1.***

A year later, Marvel published its first title, ***Marvel Comics #1.*** At the time, Marvel published under the name of Timely Comics, but some of the characters--Sub-Mariner, Human Torch, and (later on) Captain America--are very familiar to Marvel readers.

1939 also saw the introduction of Bob Kane's ***Batman***, who was joined a year later by the first teenage sidekick, Robin the Boy Wonder. The line-up of classic heroes was quickly becoming complete.

Captain Marvel debuted from Fawcett in 1940, the same year two pulp heroes, ***Shadow*** and ***Doc Savage***, made the move to comics. These guys obviously knew where the action was...

World War II was great for the comics industry; suddenly, comics had some real villains, and the war led to the creation of more heroes than most readers can imagine. A few other non-superhero concepts came to life during the war as well--most notably Archie, brought to comics in 1942.

After the war, superhero comics gradually declined; by the end of the decade, most publishers were getting out of the superhero publishing field. For many companies, war, westerns, romance, humor, adventure, horror, suspense, and science fiction was the up-and-coming field.

In 1950, William M. Gaines, son of comics pioneer Max Gaines, began publishing a series of classic horror, suspense, sf, war, and adventure comics under the EC imprint. Until the furor that arose because of Fredric Wertham's ***Seduction of the Innocent***, EC was the king of the non-hero comics field.

1953 was a bad year for superheroes; not only had most superhero books been discontinued, but one hero who had continued after the war years, Captain Marvel, was defeated by Superman in a legal battle that never actually concluded--Fawcett, the publisher of ***Captain Marvel***, merely gave up rather than lose a copyright infringement lawsuit. Superman was triumphant, but it was a pretty lonely victory.

In 1954, Wertham's ***Seduction of the Innocent*** brought new and unwanted attention to the comics industry as a major source of America's juvenile delinquency problem. Wertham never adequately proved his charge--but he didn't have to, since the accusation itself led the Senate to investigate the industry and bring about major changes in the comics field.

By the end of 1954, the Comics Code Authority was created, and EC saw the writing on the wall. While the company tried to adapt to the coming changes in comics, the attempts were unsuccessful, and within a year, all EC books except Mad would be out of business.

For the next couple of years, comics seemed to be in the doldrums. In 1956, however, DC tried in experiment in a title devoted to experiments: ***Showcase.*** In the fourth issue, they presented an updated version of a classic Golden Age hero, the ***Flash.*** After a few more experimental ***Showcase*** issues, DC decided the time was right for a new superhero, and Flash returned to his own book. For most fans, his return heralds the beginning of the Silver Age of comics (even though there were a few new heroes created before the Flash's return, none of them had the impact the Scarlet Speedster had).

DC dominated the superhero market for a few years, until Martin Goodman at Marvel noticed their success and decided to try returning Marvel to the superhero fold. In 1961, ***Fantastic Four #1*** debuted, followed in short order by ***The Hulk, The Amazing Spider-Man,*** and many other Marvel titles.

In 1965, Jim Warren decided that there was still a market for well-done horror stories written and drawn by some of the best in the comics industry, and ***Creepy*** and ***Eerie*** magazines were created, using such talents as Williamson, Wood, Frazetta, Morrow, Torres, Orlando, and others--many of whom had worked for EC years before.

The comics market continued to grow in the 1960's, with companies such as Archie, Tower, ACG, and others turning their attention towards superheroes. Meanwhile, in 1967, the first underground comic, ***Zap***, was created, giving a comic book voice to the counter-culture movement.

Comics popularity crested again in the late 1960's, and the 1970's were a period of experimentation and slight decline. Comics companies expanded into magazines and digests with some success, but audiences decreased to the point that some creators foresaw the end of the comics industry by the 1980's.

What turned the industry around? Most agree it was the direct distribution system, created by Phil Seuling in the 1970's. This system allowed a series of comics specialty shops to develop across the country, catering the the tastes and interest of a dedicated comics audience.

In 1975, Marvel and DC united efforts to publish the first of several joint books, including a ***Superman-Spider-man*** teamup and, later on, a ***Teen Titans-X-Men*** teamup.

In 1978, DC underwent a dramatic cutback often referred to as "the DC Implosion." While it looked bad for the comics industry, a comics newcomer, Eclipse, published its first graphic novel.

In the early 1980's, the independent market began to develop.

History

Several publishers, most notably Dave Sim's Aardvark-Vanaheim and Richard and Wendy Pini's WaRP, had published some independent titles in the 1970's, but the 1980's saw the market explode.

After such an explosion there was bound to be a decline. Some companies that were born in this time, such as First, survived to do very well; other companies, like Capital and Pacific, collapsed as the initial enthusiasm for independent comics waned.

1982 saw major publishers move into the graphic novel format; meanwhile, Eclipse, which had already established itself as a graphic novel publisher, moved into periodicals with Eclipse Magazine, which would lead to the Eclipse line of comic books.

In 1983, a new wave of publishers came into the field; meanwhile, publishers like Marvel and DC began to work to develop the high-quality formats they had ventured into the year before. Graphic albums and Baxter series became best-sellers. New companies like Comico began to form, and the growth of the independent market continued through the end of that year and on into 1984 and 1985. Some very small companies rose to fame at this time--companies like Mirage Press, which released the small-printing first issue of ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*** only to discover their comic was a fan favorite.

During this time period, companies like First, Eclipse, and Comico--companies which had began as small independents--took advantage of a growing market for well-done comics material to become major, established publishers in the new comics specialty market.

The independent market reached its peak in 1986, when the black-and-white explosion came into being. Dozens of new black-and-white titles were created by dozens of new companies every month, and it seemed that all of them were successful.

That success was short-lived, however, as the support for the black-and-white market waned later in 1986, causing the collapse of many of the companies who had ridden the wave of success. While a number of the companies you read about in this ***CSN Collector's Guide*** began before the black and white collapse and managed to survive it, there were dozens of others that simply disappeared.

In 1986, Marvel created its New Universe; DC recreated its old Universe by destroying much of it in ***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** and altering a major part of it in the ***Man of Steel*** miniseries that allowed John Byrne to recreate Superman.

The past two years have seen an incredible growth in expensive comics items--graphic novels, trade paperbacks, prestige-format comics, hardcovers, and limited editions--and a regrowth of the independent market after the black-and-white market collapse of 1986.

And now it's 1988; let's take a look at what's happening in the comics field today. In the upcoming pages, ***CSN*** will give you information on the background and history on some of the major comics companies, as well as some insights into what directions these companies are moving in later on this year. After each entry, we'll give you a list of some of that company's hottest titles, so you can check them out.

Bloodwing • Dark Wolf • Liberator • New Humans •

Did you know that Eternity is the direct market's seventh largest publisher?

The Shattered Earth Chronicles • Wild Knights • Futurians • Dark Wolf • Outlander • Pirate • Scarlet in Gaslight • Ex-Mutants • Stealth Force • With Girls • Yakuza • Dinosaurs For Hire • Ex-Mutants: • Graphic Novel • Verdict • Bloodwing • Liberator • New Humans • Ninja • Outlander • Corps. • Retrograde • Rovers • Scarlet • Solo Ex-Mutants • Starlight • Trouble With Girls • Yakuza • Dinosaurs • Empire • Ex-Mutants: The Shattered Earth Chronicles • Wild Knights • Futurians • Graphic Novel • Verdict • Bloodwing • Dark Wolf • New Humans • Ninja • Outlander • Retrograde • Rovers • Scarlet in Gaslight • Ex-Mutants • Starlight • Stealth Force • Girls • Yakuza • Dinosaurs For Hire • Empire • Ex-Mutants: The Shat-

Eternity publishes the hottest new talent on the comics horizon. If you can't find our titles at your local retailer, enclose a S.A.S.E for a complete catalog.

ETERNITY

Home of the Rising Stars

2635 Lavery Ct. #11, Newbury Park, CA, 91320

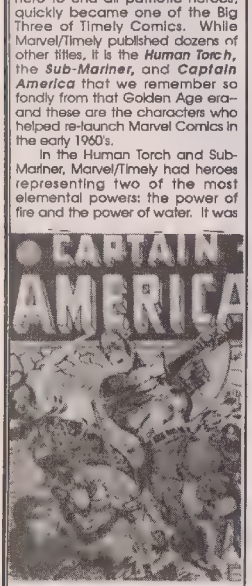
Marvel Comics

Marvel Comics is the most successful comic book company today--but that wasn't always the case. Not only is Marvel not the first comics company, it has gone through periods in its history when its impact in the comics field was very minor--hard to believe when you consider the incredible impact Marvel has on comics today.

Marvels roots in comics can be traced all the way back to 1939, when Marvel began its first title, ***Marvel Comics.*** In that initial title were the debut appearances of two of Marvel's best-known characters--the Human Torch (created by Carl Burgos) and the Sub-Mariner (created by Bill Everett). This book appeared at the very beginning of the superhero era that made up the Golden Age of Comics, and the two were soon joined by many other heroes, including The Angel, the Patriot, the Vision, The Raven, and others. It was a creation by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby that became the third major hero of the Timely era (Timely being the name Marvel published under in the beginning): ***Captain America.***

Captain America, a patriotic hero to end all patriotic heroes, quickly became one of the Big Three of Timely Comics. While Marvel/Timely published dozens of other titles, it is the ***Human Torch,*** the ***Sub-Mariner,*** and ***Captain America*** that we remember so fondly from that Golden Age era--and these are the characters who helped re-launch Marvel Comics in the early 1960's.

In the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner, Marvel/Timely had heroes representing two of the most elemental powers: the power of fire and the power of water. It was natural that the two of them should not only meet but should be enemies, as was the case in ***Marvel Mystery #8.***



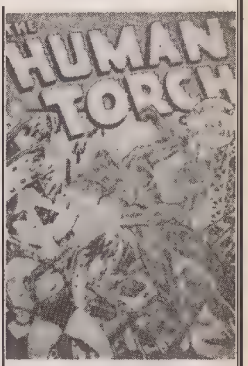
In ***Captain America,*** Marvel had not only an amazingly successful comic book, but a comic that would have an indelible effect on the way comics were drawn and comics stories were told. With Simon and Kirby at the helm, the incredible action of ***Captain America*** became a comics standard, and the scope and intensity of the visual action in the book became legendary. Later in the '40's, Captain America even ventured beyond the comic book page into the realm of movie serials, with only moderate success.

Marvel/Timely even experimented with super-teams, offering not only the ***All Winners Squad,*** featuring several of its most famous heroes, but also the ***Young Allies,*** uniting several of its younger heroes and sidekicks.

As the war ended, the superhero boom began to decline, and Marvel was particularly hard hit. As the '40's gave way to the '50's, comics readers saw more and more of Marvel's line switching over to genre fiction: horror, western, and war titles dominated the Marvel line, and even the major heroes were not invulnerable as they saw their books cancelled, or in some cases, changed; ***Captain America*** eventually became ***Captain America's Weird Tales*** before being discontinued entirely.

For Marvel in the 1950's, horror/sf/fantasy was the byword. The company published dozens of titles in these genres--some of the titles later became the home of Marvel's superheroes, with books like ***Tales of Suspense, Journey into Mystery, Tales to Astonish, Strange Tales,*** and ***Amazing Adult Fantasy*** becoming a part of Marvel's line-up.

Even in the '50's, though, Marvel experimented with superheroes to a degree. ***Sub-Mariner, the Human Torch,*** and ***Captain America*** all returned briefly in the mid-50's, and there were costumed genre heroes like ***The Two-Gun Kid,*** a western costumed hero, and Joe Maneely's ***Black Knight,*** a heroic fantasy. Most of these super-hero experiments met with little success, though; it just seemed that, for the most part, the comics-reading public in the middle 1950's was wearied of super-hero adventures. Marvel eventually quit trying and fell into a niche they could fill very well: monster stories, science fiction, and bizarre fantasy pieces. By the end of the 1950's, Marvel had a stable of some of the



best talent in the field, with such luminaries as Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Gene Colan, Dick Ayers, Don Heck, and Joe Sinnott all working with editor/head writer Stan Lee to fill the pages of the numerous Marvel titles devoted to the horror/sf/fantasy genre.

Stan Lee and Jack Kirby still had very fond memories of superheroes, however, and when publisher Martin Goodman suggested in 1961 that the company might try a super-team again following the success of DC's ***Justice League,*** Marvel debuted its new superhero line with its first book, ***The Fantastic Four.*** The Human Torch was back--but it wasn't the same Human Torch. His three teammates also had superpowers--but unlike the DC heroes, who seemed to view their team as a lodge meeting with all their buddies, the Marvel heroes were human. They bickered; they didn't see eye to eye; at times, they even quit the team and went off on their own.

This was the beginning of the Marvel Age of Comics, although no one seemed to know it then. Marvel had developed superheroes with problems and personalities, and comics fans found the change refreshing. Soon after the team was created, the Human Torch ran across Sub-Mariner, a victim of amnesia, living a destitute life in the Bowery. A second Timely legend returned to Marvel Comics--as a very angry villain.

Meanwhile, Stan Lee and Steve Ditko had created a new teenage hero for the last issue of ***Amazing Fantasy***--a teen who had been bitten by a radioactive spider, giving him the proportionate

Marvel Comics

powers of a spider. Like many of the readers of Spider-Man, Peter Parker had personal problems, social problems, and school problems--and he had an immense following very soon after his creation and the debut of his own title.

While Lee, Kirby, Ditko, and others were busy creating the basic titles of the growing Marvel Universe in the mid-60's, unleashing Iron Man, Ant-Man, Thor, the Avengers, The X-Men, and the Hulk, the third element of Marvel's Golden Age Trio appeared in the pages of ***Strange Tales #114.*** The Human Torch did battle with Captain America in that issue--and while it turned out not to be the real Captain America, it still led to the return of Steve Rogers in ***Avengers #4*** a few months later.

By the end of the 1960's, Marvel was on its way to prominence in the comics field--and a large number of new creations had been unveiled, including SHIELD, the Silver Surfer, Daredevil, Galactus, and more.

As Marvel moved into the 1970's, the company grew even more, and Stan Lee was no longer able to write virtually every Marvel title. Roy Thomas came in to assist Stan at the end of the 60's, and by the time the next decade had moved in, Marvel was using a number of talented writers and artists who had not been a part of that initial Marvel renaissance.

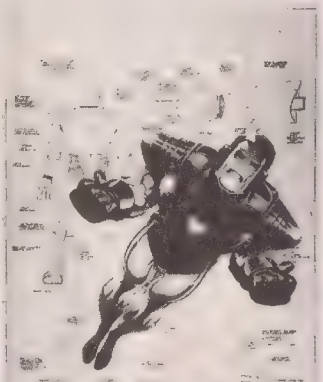
While the number of books that Marvel published continue to grow in the 1970's as the company ventured into horror/fantasy ***(Werewolf by Night, Frankenstein, Tomb of Dracula)***, martials arts ***(Deadly Hands of Kung-Fu, Iron Fist, Master of Kung-Fu)***, and heroic fantasy (Red Sonja, Kull, Conan) in addition to super-heroes, the company seemed to have trouble finding a direction.

Marvel's popularity continued to grow in the super-hero field, however, with the return of the ***X-Men*** to their own non-reprint title. It's hard to believe that, for a while in the early '70's, there was no new Mutants title at all--the ***X-Men*** book had actually become a reprint series because of low readership!

Several talented comics creators worked in the editor-in-chief slot, but no one seemed interested in signing on for the long haul until Jim Shooter became editor-in-chief on January 2, 1978.

Jim Shooter first worked to improve the pay and working conditions for Marvel's creators--something that drew several hot talents to Marvel, where they could earn royalties and make more money.

"I was far from satisfied with merely increasing the existing Marvel comics sales, though," Jim Shooter said. "I was also interested in experimenting with new formats and widening the variety of material we published." Thus



began Marvel's venture into more mature publishing with ***Epic Illustrated*** magazine.

In 1982, under Jim Shooter's editorship, Marvel made the move to graphic novels with the publication of ***The Death of Captain Marvel.*** More graphic novels followed, some of them featuring creator-owned characters. "Then, late in the year, we followed that up with our first creator-owned regular comics series ***Dreadstar...*** I remember that Archie Goodwin (editor of Epic) groaned when I first came to him with the idea that we should launch an Idea of Epic Comics." But that line was launched, and for the first time, Marvel was publishing (under the Epic imprint) comics that were creator-owned concepts.

A children's line, Star Comics, followed in 1984. Marvel's output continued to grow, with more graphic novels, more limited series, more Baxter and bookshelf format titles, more trade paperbacks, and more posters featuring Marvel characters.

In 1986, Marvel unveiled its New Universe--a world totally separate from the Marvel Universe. To begin with, the New Universe met with lukewarm success; with Editor-in-Chief Tom DeFalco's push to revitalize the New Universe in 1987, however, many of the New Universe titles are becoming very successful.

Current Editor-in-Chief Tom DeFalco has two main goals, he says: "To keep Marvel Comics the most popular, successful comics company there is, and to bring back a sense of hoohah fun in Marvel's comics."

"I started doing freelance work for Marvel in the late '70s," DeFalco said, "and started working as an editor in late 1980 or early 1981. On April 15, 1987, I became Editor-in-Chief of Marvel Comics--which is sort of funny, because that's a date I used to dread."

Being an Editor-in-Chief is a trying job, according to DeFalco: "Basically, I sit around a lot; put my feet up on the desk, smoke cigars, occasionally order pizza with sausage and pepperoni, and I glare at people every now and then. Basically, I get to read the comics first and keep everything on track. With Marvel's editors, though, I don't have to do that much more than just applaud the editors of the books--Marvel's people know what the readers want."

"Here's the truth," DeFalco revealed to ***CSN.*** "They do all the work, and I get all the credit. The editors are the ones who do the actual work; they hire the creative people, they shepherd the book from a basic idea into a beautiful finished product. I talk to them in terms of general storylines, in terms of where a character is going, in terms of the members of the team. I deal with vague generalities, and they deal with very specific situations. They make all my generalities work. I oversee the line, and that's pretty much it."

It took a while for Tom DeFalco to get a chance to make his mark on Marvel Comics, since many projects were already in the works from Jim Shooter's prior editorship.

Marvel Comics

One of Tom DeFalco's first projects was the ***Marvel Masterworks*** series that offered quality hardcover reprints of the first ten issues of ***X-Men, Fantastic Four,*** and ***Spider-man*** last Christmas. "I had always wanted to have hardcovers of those books on my shelves, and when I got a chance to do them, I jumped at it. I'm glad they sold so well--but it was a really selfish thing for me." Marvel plans to follow up the success of last year's hardcovers with new volumes reprinting the second ten issues of each of those three titles, plus the first ten issues of ***The Avengers,*** in time for Christmas sales in 1988.

Another project Tom DeFalco saw to fruition was the creation of Marvel's bi-weekly ***Marvel Comics*** title, which will begin in early May of this year. "It will feature four storylines in each issue; they'll be rotating features, usually with two serials and two complete stories. The first few issues will have two serials and two complete stories, just to get things underway. We're starting off with ***Wolverine*** by Chris Claremont and John Buscema, ***Man-Thing*** by Steve Gerber and Tom Sutton, and ***Master of Kung-Fu*** by Doug Moench and Tom Grindberg. I've read the first few issues, and I think that any one of these stories is worth the price of admission."

"We're also coming out with a brand-new superhero in the Marvel Universe: ***Speedball, the Masked Marvel,***" DeFalco said. "We're trying to do things differently here. Some writers tell us you need a minimum of seven issues to tell a story; we're going to tell two stories an issue. They tell us that people prefer gritty adult drama; we're going to do a teenage superhero. They say that comics have to be depressing to be successful; this comic is going to be a lot of fun. Roger Stern will be writing ***Speedball,*** Steve Ditko will be pencilling and plotting it, and Jackson Guice will be inking it. It's different from the kind of things that are on sale now, and it's a lot of fun."

"We're coming out with a second Punisher title, ***The Punisher's War Journal,***" DeFalco said. "This will tie the Punisher in more closely with the Marvel Universe; you'll see a fair number of crossovers on this title."

Another Marvel project in the near future is a twelve-issue ***Sub-Mariner*** limited series. "It will start with the Sub-Mariner's first appearance in the Marvel Universe in the 1930's and bring him up-to-date, thanks to Roy Thomas and Rich Buckler, the writer and penciller of the series."

Dr. Strange and ***Cloak and Dagger,*** currently the stars of ***Strange Tales,*** will get their own books again in the summer.

"One thing we're doing by popular--very, very popular--demand is that we're giving Wolverine his own book," DeFalco said. "People always said that wanted Wolverine to have his own title, and even the serial in Marvel Comics didn't seem to satisfy them, so we're giving him his own book in June."

Excalibur will move into its own regular title following up on the success of last year's bookshelf comic. Chris Claremont and Alan Davis and Paul Neary, the team who did the bookshelf comic, will return to do the ongoing series as well.

Marvel will preview some of its new series in this year's ***Marvel Age Annual,*** which will offer brief Wolverine, Speedball, and Damage Control stories.

Wolfpack will be moving into a twelve-issue limited series following the success of the graphic novel; the first issue should debut in early May.

Marvel also has several graphic novels on schedule, including an ***Inhumans*** graphic novel, a ***Silver Surfer*** graphic novel by Stan Lee and John Buscema (done entirely in splash pages), and a ***Last of the Dragons*** graphic novel collecting the stories that were published in ***Epic Illustrated*** magazine.

Marvel also has a very strong trade paperback program planned, offering a variety of reprints in trade paperback format, including the six-part ***Kraven*** series that was so popular in the Spider-man titles last year, the ***Hercules*** mini-series, and another ***The Nam*** trade paperback.

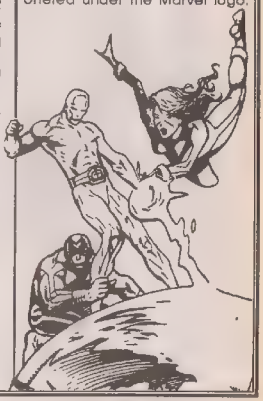
In the New Universe, the events following the destruction of Pittsburgh continue to alter the reality of the New Universe. A series of quarterly bookshelf-format comics are planned, and more problems will affect the New Universe. "As a result of the destruction of Pittsburgh, the US government has reinstated the draft, drafting the paranormals; they're getting ready to go war. After that, who knows?" DeFalco said. "The destruction of the Earth in that Universe is certainly possible. We're giving readers stories here that we couldn't do in the Marvel Universe. We decided to go for broke, and it's working. A lot of that success is due to the work of Howard Mackie, Mark Gruenwald, and John Byrne." No additional New Universe ongoing titles are planned in the next few months, however.

Under the Epic banner, Marvel has already unveiled its Shadow Line Saga; the three titles in that series, ***Dr. Zero, Power Line,*** and ***St. George,*** will continue to develop the background of the Shadow Race in the next few months.

Farther down the line, Marvel has plans to do a ***Havok/Wolverine*** bookshelf-format miniseries under the Epic imprint. The book will be fully painted by Kent Williams and John J. Muth.

Bill Sienkiewicz will be writing and illustrating a miniseries, ***Stray Toasters,*** for Epic later on this year as well.

Marvel's Star line will continue to offer a variety of non-superhero titles; in the comics specialty shops, those comics will continue to be offered under the Marvel logo.



Marvel Comics

"We're doing Star Comics for two reasons. First, we needed books to appeal to a younger audience; unless we can interest a younger audience in comic books now, we're going to see fewer comic book readers down the line. Also, we wanted to produce a humor line of books. Star has comics for the younger reader and humor comics for the older readers. ***Bullwinkle and Rocky*** and ***Heathcliff*** have a dual readership; they appeal to people under twelve and people over thirty. ***Alf*** appeals to everybody. It's been quite a success," DeFalco said.

"Marvel is constantly looking to expand the marketplace, and Star and Epic are just two ways of doing that. We know that there are millions of people out there who would love comics if they tried them, so we want to make it easy to try them," DeFalco explained.

When asked why Marvel remains such an incredibly popular publisher, Tom DeFalco said it was a very difficult question to answer without seeming conceited. "I guess we must be doing what people want to read," he conjectured.

HOT PICKS AT MARVEL

Marvel has so many hot titles and hot projects in the works that it's hard to choose just a few, but there are some that deserve particular mention.

The biweekly ***Marvel Comics*** series is sure to be hot; with Wolverine, Man-Thing, and Master of Kung-Fu stories, the book should disappear from shelves very quickly.

Of course, the hottest book of the summer will most likely be the ***Wolverine*** series. For years, fans have clamored for the series, and now it's here.

The ***X-Men*** titles will be very hot in the next few months, leading up to an ***X-Men/X-Factor*** confrontation in a series of books subtitled ***"Inferno"*** running this fall. This series will run through all the Marvel mutant books, will be connected to a new series entitled ***eXterminator*** and will probably be just as hot as the Fall of the Mutants storyline was last year.

The Punisher remains a very hot series for Marvel; the addition of a new Punisher title promises that the book will be even hotter, since it will bring the Punisher into action with other heroes from the Marvel Universe.

The ***Shadow Line Saga*** of books from Epic is certain to be hot; the series has been very successful thus far, and the creators working on the books are some of comics' best.

Peter David's ***Incredible Hulk*** continues to get hotter and hotter; fans who had given up on the Hulk a few years ago are being knocked off their feet by the things David's doing in the series.

The Spider-man books are certainly hot, but Todd MacFarlane's artwork is making ***The Amazing Spider-man*** sizzle.

With Walt Simonson taking the book in new directions, ***The Avengers*** is heating up fast. Look for some major team changes in the near future.

Steve Ditko, Jackson Guice, Roger Stern, and a teenage superhero all sound like the perfect chemistry to bring ***Speedball*** to a boil very fast.

With an interrelated storyline involving the High Evolutionary, more pages than ever before, and some great creative work, the various annuals Marvel is doing this year look like they're going to be hot indeed. While Marvel says each annual can be read independently, look for all of them to heat up because of interest in the storyline and the new heroes the series will introduce.

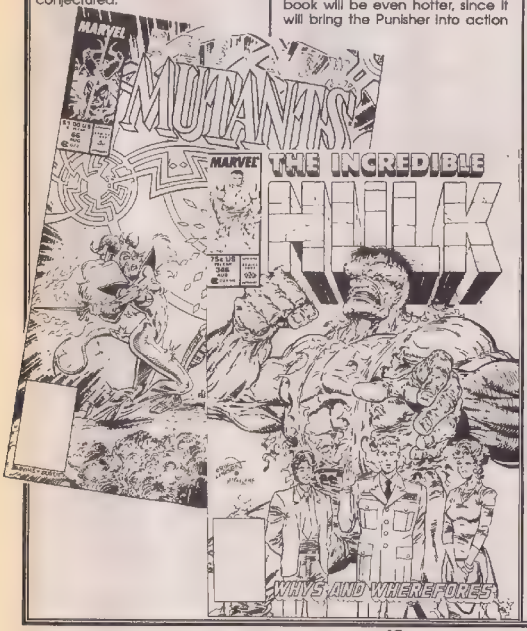
The Stan Lee/John Buscema ***Silver Surfer*** graphic novel will be hot, as will the Michael Saenz ***Iron Man*** graphic novel, which should be appearing in comics shops about the time this ***Collectors' Guide*** is out.

Marvel's new humor title, ***What Th--?!***, is sure to be hot; any book that presents some of comics' most major talents making fun of various Marvel heroes is bound to be a success. Watch for John Byrne's and Jerry Ordway's story pitting the Fantastical Four against Superduperman...

Marshall Rogers is taking over the art on ***GI Joe*** soon, and that should heat up interest in this once-hot title that's cooled a little bit.

Starbrand remains the hottest of all the New Universe titles; look for John Byrne to continue to keep this title a must-read for New Universe fans.

Many of Marvel's "old-timers" are becoming very hot again, including ***Iron Man, Captain America,*** and ***Thor***. Readers who have been passing them by in the past few years might want to take another look.



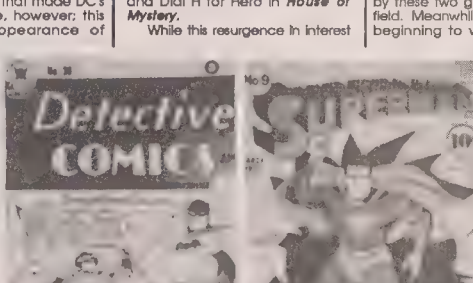
DC Comics

DC is the oldest comic book company still in business in America; from the company's beginnings in 1935 until the present day, DC has published more comics than anyone else

DC's first title was ***New Fun #1***, published by Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson in 1935. This was the first comic book to contain all-new material and not just another bunch of comic strip reprints. Two years later, the company began ***Detective Comics***, from which it took its DC name.

It was the publication of ***Action Comics #1*** in 1938 that made DC's fame and fortune, however; this was the first appearance of Superman, and it revolutionized the comic book industry. Thanks to Jerry Siegel's and Joe Shuster's Kryptonian creation, superheroes became a part of comic books--and the industry has never been the same.

In 1939,, Batman appeared in the pages of ***Detective Comics #27***; in another year, DC would introduce the first super-hero team, the first appearance of Wonder Woman, the creation of the teenage sidekick in the pages of ***Detective*** with the introduction of Robin, and many more comic book standards.



As the 1940's came to a close, DC saw a decline in superhero popularity (as did every publisher in the industry). DC moved into radio-show tie-ins and adventure titles.

By the 1950's, the superhero had fallen off in popularity enough that DC put a major emphasis on romance comics, science fiction titles, westerns, and humor books (some humor titles featured such notable television and film stars as Bob Hope, Jackie Gleason, and Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis).

Those of you who are avid superhero fans today have DC to thank for the return to fame and glory of the super-hero. It was DC who decided to introduce a new hero, the Martian Manhunter, as a back-up feature in ***Detective Comics #225***. Shortly after that, DC followed it up with the return of the Flash in the pages of ***Showcase #4***--although this was an all-new Flash, a man who was an avid fan of the Golden Age ***Flash Comics*** before he became the World's Fastest Man in his own world.

The superhero field began to blossom again behind DC's lead, and by the early 1960's, DC had brought back updated versions of some of its most popular creations, including Green Lantern, Hawkman, and the Atom. Even its science fiction and mystery titles had shifted towards super-heroes with the addition of Adam Strange in ***Mystery In Space***, the Doom Patrol in ***My Greatest Adventure***, and Dial H for Hero in ***House of Mystery***.

While this resurgence in interest in superhero comics was going so strong that it earned the nickname of The Silver Age, one of DC's creations ventured in new directions. With comics superheroes become more and more popular, ABC decided the time was right for the superhero to hit the airwaves, and the ***Batman*** television show began not one, but two nights a week in 1966. The show, which used a "camp" approach that utilized silly humor, deadpan straightlines, and cliched cliffhangers, nonetheless became incredibly popular--so popular that "camp" became a part of DC's comics--and "go-go checks," a black-and-white check pattern, became a part of DC's cover motif.

In the late 1960's, DC pushed both into its past and into its comics future by bringing back such characters as The Spectre and a revised Green Arrow, and by making use of such now-greats as Berni Wrightson, Jeff Jones, Howard Chaykin, and others on books. As the 60's gave way to the 70's, DC continued to produce new comics hero ideas--not since the 1940's had so many different superheroes debuted in such a brief time period.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, the difference between DC and Marvel began to lessen as two of Marvel's best-known artist-creators, Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby, left Marvel and came to work for DC, bringing new and innovative ideas with them. ***The Creeper, the Hawk and the Dove, the New Gods, Mr. Miracle,*** and many other ideas were the result of the move by these two giants of the comics field. Meanwhile, new greats were beginning to work for DC, most notably Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams, who changed ***Green Lantern*** from just another superhero strip to one of the first "socially relevant comics" ever done.

In the 1970's, DC was active in the return of horror comics, gothic romances, sword-and-sorcery, and other genres--but unlike the late 1940's and early 1950's, DC's superhero emphasis never faded.

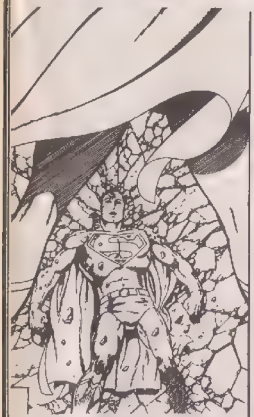
In the past decade, DC has been involved in creating or updating dozens of its heroes. As the comics market "grew up," becoming more mature and more financially able to support better-quality formats and more sophisticated ideas, DC moved into Baxter series (books printed with better printing methods on higher-quality paper), mini-series and maxi-series (series with a set, finite number of issues--anywhere from 2-issues to 12 issues), and most recently, prestige-format series.

DC ventured in graphic novels in the early 1980's, offering a variety of videogame tie-ins, science fiction adaptations, and super-hero adventures in graphic novel format.

In 1984, DC introduced the "hardcover/softcover" publishing plane wherein two of its most popular titles, ***Teen Titans*** and ***Legion of Super-Heroes***, were offered on deluxe paper at a higher price and then, a year later, were reprinted in standard comics format at a lower price.

Not content with being the sec-

DC Comics



ond-most-popular comic book company, DC decided that it was time to make a major push to regaining its status as the #1 company in the comics field.

Part of that push began in 1986, when DC began to bring its major characters--all of whom had undergone sales slumps in the 1980's--back into prominence again. With the publication of ***Dark Knight***, the first prestige-format book, DC reestablished the Batman's image as a creature of the night. Suddenly comics were growing up, and people were looking at comics--and DC in particular--in a new light.

The biggest event in the past decade in comics occurred in 1986 when DC re-vitalized Superman in a six-issue miniseries written and illustrated by John Byrne--and then started ***Superman*** all over again with #1. With Superman and Batman already given new life, George Perez did the same for ***Wonder Woman.***

DC's ***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** was DC's boldest move; the company "rewrote" fifty years of continuity by presenting a mini-series that combined all its comics worlds into a single continuity, altering, creating, and killing DC heroes in the process. From that point on, DC was an all-new company, and none of the old rules applied.

As DC reinterpreted several more of its old concepts, including the ***Flash, Green Lantern,*** and ***Justice League,*** people became aware more and more that DC was a company determined to push for #1. With the introduction of more expensive trade paperbacks, hardcover graphic novels, deluxe hardcover limited editions, and other collector's items, DC's growth in popularity has been phenomenal.

1988 shows DC moving forward in a variety of ways: the company is offering products of many different types, designed to appeal to different audiences. For the more mature, sophisticated reader, DC will be offering a 10-issue limited series ***V for Vendetta*** by Alan Moore and David Lloyd. In addition, titles like ***Hellblazer*** and ***Swamp Thing*** continue to appeal to the reader who wants more than just superheroes.

For the superhero fan, however, DC has a number of things in mind, including the return of the Atom in his own series; the debut of a ***Manunter*** comic book; the revitalization of Animal-Man, a hero from the 1960's; the addition of the first ongoing comics weekly title, ***Action Comics Weekly;*** plus new prestige-format series including a Batman series by Jim Starlin and Berni Wrightson.

On the more distant horizon for DC is a hardcover ***Teen Titans*** graphic novel, a new ***Aquaman*** series, a new ***Teen Titans*** title, more media tie-ins, and a number of mini-series.

HOT PICKS FOR DC

Perhaps DC's biggest ongoing sales success is ***Justice League International;*** with J.M. DeMatteis, Keith Giffen, and Kevin Maguire supplying some of the wittiest, flashiest, and best-drawn comics material being published, this is one title that remains a very hot seller.

DC's upcoming ***Batman: The Cult*** series by Jim Starlin and Berni Wrightson seems quite likely to duplicate the incredible success of Frank Miller's ***Dark Knight*** series--with its prestige-format package and its highly-successful team of creators, this is a title to watch. Another hot title for DC is the one-shot ***Batman: The Killing Joke*** prestige-format book by Alan Moore and Brian Bolland.

Action Comics Weekly is a sure-fire success for DC; the book will offer six different strips each week, and the creators involved in the title include Mike Grell, Gil Kane, Mike Baron, Dan Spiegle, Max Collins, Jim Owsley, and others. Furthermore, DC has acquired covers for the new weekly from some of comics' best-known artists.

DC's classic trio of heroes--***Superman, Batman,*** and ***Wonder Woman***--are currently some of DC's hottest, thanks to the efforts of the creators who are working on these titles. John Byrne, Jerry Ordway, George Perez, Jim Starlin, Jim Aparo, Stan Woch, and others keep the quality high on these titles.

The Flash is another hot seller for DC; with William Messner-Loebs taking over the writing from Mike Baron, this series should maintain its high quality and its fan-favorite status for a while to come.

DC has a number of hot new series just released or upcoming, including ***The Manhunter*** and the ***New Guardians,*** both of which relate to DC's incredibly successful ***Millennium*** series of two years ago.

V for Vendetta, the Alan Moore/David Lloyd British series being completed for DC, is sure to be a major success to the comics fan who enjoyed Moore's work on ***Watchmen.***

DC also offers a variety of more expensive books that are quite hot, including the limited edition ***Watchmen*** and ***History of the DC Universe*** hardcovers; the ***Batman: Year One*** hardcover reprinting the outstanding Frank Miller/Dave Mazzuchelli series; and the ***Watchmen*** portfolio, offering the covers to the American series, the promotional art, and the French covers, all by Dave Gibbons. As you might expect, anything related to DC's incredibly successful ***Watchmen*** series remains hot.

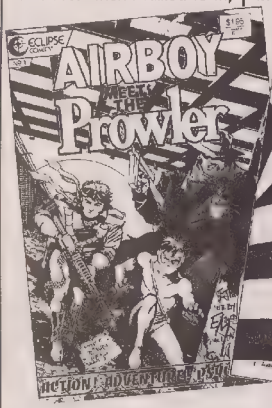
Green Arrow is DC's latest major success; this title remains very hot, carrying on the momentum of the ***Green Arrow: Last of the Longbow Hunters*** series that Mike Grell did for DC last year.

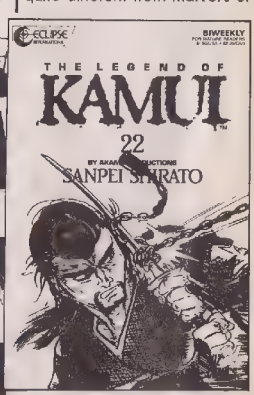
DC's ***Teen Titans,*** one of the company's first hot titles, continues to be a very hot seller for DC under the guidance of co-creator Marv Wolfman; the addition of a ***Teen Titans West*** title later this year should make the series even hotter.

Eclipse

"Eclipse actually started in April of 1977," Dean Mullaney said. "I was dissatisfied with the comics I was reading. I was visiting Don McGregor, a writer whose work I enjoyed, I saw a painting on the wall. I thought it was Jimi Hendrix, but he told me that it was a Paul Gulacy painting of a character that he and Paul had created–but that they hadn't been able to place it yet.

"I talked to Don about my publishing plans, and he said he was interested. Then I talked to my brother Jan, who put the money up, and we were ready to go."





As it turns out, the first Eclipse publication, ***Sabre***, was also the first graphic novel done for the direct market. In today's market, where there are scores of comics companies aiming for the direct-only market at comics shops throughout the country, it may be surprising to some people that Eclipse was the first company to aim for the direct market. "I've always thought the direct market was the only way to go," Dean said. "The entire comics system wasn't working like it should, and part of the problem was the way books were marketed and distributed."

Cat Yronwode, editor-in-chief of Eclipse Comics, wasn't with the company in the beginning. Her involvement began later on in a more roundabout way. "I was working for the ***Comics Buyer's Guide*** back when Alan Light was publishing it. I was their news reporter, so I'd call around to the various companies and get news from them about what they were going to do. I talked to Dean a lot about comics, and we got to know each other. Yronwode started working as an editor soon afterward. Finally,, the two of them moved Eclipse from New York to Columbia, Missouri–then, a short time later, to California, where the company is still located.

In its early days, Eclipse published virtually nothing but graphic novels. "We published some great graphic novels--***Night Music*** by Craig Russell, ***Detectives Inc.*** by McGregor and Rogers--but we finally decided to try a periodical. Three years after Eclipse began, we released ***Eclipse Magazine.***"

The move from magazines to comic books came about as a result of a lawsuit Steve Gerber had filed against Marvel Comics. "Steve was suing over the ownership of ***Howard the Duck,***" Dean said, "and we had discussed devising a publication that would help him finance the lawsuit. Well, the result was ***Destroyer Duck,*** which not only helped Steve, but it proved that the fans were very responsive to a color comic from Eclipse."

The major cause of the expansion of Eclipse's line had nothing to do with Eclipse Comics at all in the beginning. In 1983, the Pacific line of comics went out of business. "We bought the film for the books and put them into production very quickly," Dean added.

Growth came fast to Eclipse. Beginning as a company that published only an occasional graphic novel, by 1983 Eclipse was publishing 8 books a month. By 1984, the total had jumped up to a dozen a month. In 1987, Eclipse averaged 25 titles a month–but, according to Dean, the company will probably average 20 to 22 a month for 1988. "It's early to tell, though," adds Cat. "We're looking to expand our line somewhat, and if we get good books, we aren't going to pass on them just because we hadn't planned to publish that many titles."

Eclipse remains the oldest privately-owned comics company, which makes the Eclipse operation quite different from Marvel's or DC's. "When you have your own company," Cat said, "you can look at things on a long-term basis. I don't have to make a profit off each and every book every quarter–since I answer only to myself, I can look at the longer-range plan. We can make enough money to cover the hard years, or to start expanding, or to get us through unexpected pitfalls like floods that wipe out our entire town."

This doesn't mean that Eclipse is a non-profit company, however; Eclipse is in business to make money, Dean Mullaney stressed, and they've been successful at this in their first decade. "All of our profits are recycled into the company, to produce new comics," Dean said. "We don't have outside stockholders or a parent company we have to show a profit to."

Being a privately owned company has given Eclipse the luxury of publishing eclectic titles in its ten year history. No other company has spanned quite as wide a range of material as Eclipse. This has led to some unusual titles from Eclipse in its first decade. ***Tales of***

Eclipse

the Beanworld is a title often pointed out as being a radical departure from virtually everything else done in comics. "We saw xeroxes of early Beanworld strips," Cat said, " and we thought they were great. We knew we had to have Beanworld, so we talked to Larry and ended up with the series. It reaches a very different audience than anything else we publish--but that's not bad. We want to reach different audiences."

Another audience that Eclipse addressed was the opera enthusiast: In the past few years, Eclipse has published some comic adaptations of operas. The idea for this series came from the creator, P. Craig Russell--and she and Dean feels it gives a perfect example of how the Eclipse system works well for both the creator and the publisher.

"The opera adaptations came about because we wanted to publish anything that Craig Russell wants to draw," Cat said. "He has a split personality: he inks for money to pay the bills, but he pencils, inks, and colors for love of his art as much as for money."

"When he approached us about doing the opera adaptations, we said of course," Dean continued. "The orders on the first opera adaptations were modest, as we thought they might be. Nonetheless, Craig won the Best Artist Jack Kirby award that year. And as more people heard how great his work was, more people began picking up the second adaptation. Now he gets the financial rewards plus the critical rewards. It took time to establish the market, and some companies wouldn't have been willing to take the time, because they couldn't make as big a profit as they wanted right from the beginning. We've helped Craig establish a market and do what he wants to do--and now we've negotiated a European deal that will offer the opera adaptations in a graphic novel package that will be simultaneously released in five different languages."

Eclipse's strong respect for creator's rights led to their acquisition of the ***Miracleman*** series as well. Since the rights to Alan Moore's interpretation of the British Marvelman character were owned by Alan Moore, he chose Eclipse because they had the expertise to publish a color comic and had proven their respect for creator's rights.

"***Miracleman*** did very well for us, and it put us in touch with a more super-hero oriented market," Mullaney explained. The Miracleman material proved so popular that Eclipse has just finished negotiating a contract with Warner Books to offer a trade paperback reprint of the ***Miracleman*** books, with the first trade paperback tentatively scheduled for this summer. In addition, Eclipse will be offering reprints of some of the 1950's Marvelman material from England under the ***Miracleman Family*** title--and artist Gary Leach will return to do new covers for the series.

One of Eclipse's hottest characters currently is Airboy. Originally published by Hillman in the 1940's and early 1950's, Airboy was all but forgotten and had lapsed out of copyright. Eclipse and Chuck Dixon brought the character out of obscurity, updated him, and turned him into a major success.

"We started ***Airboy*** off as a bi-weekly because we wanted to do a bi-weekly comic, to get the book out there in more frequent doses," Cat said. "It was successful, but we ended up taking ***Airboy*** off the bi-weekly schedule at the first of the year: it's hard to do a bi-weekly color book because there are more steps involved, and there's a time factor involved in each step." Airboy still remains one of Eclipse's most popular characters, and he is virtually the only character on whom Eclipse holds the trademark.

The success of ***Airboy*** in the bi-weekly format helped Eclipse land its four Japanese manga titles--soon to be five titles with the addition of Lum this May. "I'd been negotiating with the Japanese publisher for about two years," Dean explained. "We felt that Japanese comics and animation could be extremely popular in America, but the company was very slow at negotiating. In Japan, where comics sell 10 times better than they do here, our market looked pretty small. The fact that we were able to do a bi-weekly ***Airboy*** comic helped convince them that we could do the Japanese manga material in a bi-weekly package, so we were able to come to an agreement and begin the manga reprints in May of 1987. By the end of the year we should have a few more manga titles, even some from other Japanese publishers."

Eclipse

Recently, 4Winds has developed some hot titles for Eclipse, including ***Scout: War Shaman*** and ***Revenge of the Prowler.*** Some people thought that 4Winds was another Eclipse company, but Cat explained that that wasn't the case. "4Winds is a packaging group that has the same relationship to Eclipse that Will Eisner's studio had to Quality Comics. We commission the work to be done, we pay the bills, they do the work, and they send it to us for editing and production. We talk over ideas, come up with a rough plan on what's going to happen in the books; after that, I get scripts in the mail which I edit, send back, and they turn them into comic books. I don't have to manage it or traffic it--Tim Truman does that, along with Chuck Dixon and Tim Harkins. They have a regular crew that they use on their books."

4Winds is more than a comics production group, however; they also were responsible for Eclipse's first record release, the ***Marauders*** album (due out soon on compact disc). With Dean Mullaney's brother Jan being a professional musician, Dean had always been interested in music--and had always thought it would be nice to have a record company. Ironically, it was Tim Truman, creator/artist/writer of ***Scout***, who made it possible.

"Tim is a musician," Dean explained. "He keeps his guitar in his studio, right behind him, and he occasionally takes breaks and plays for a while. He taped some of his musical interludes and sent them to us. We knew he was good.

"He asked us about the idea of using a flexidisc in ***Scout #19*** with some of his music. We both said great, and we did it. It went over very well; the mail was fabulous.

"Then Tim asked if we would be interested in doing an entire album of Tim Truman and the Dixie Pistols. This was the birth of the Eclipse Records label."

With a growing line of comics, graphic albums, and now records and CD's in the Eclipse stable, it seems like there's no room to do anything else. According to Dean and Cat, however, Eclipse still has a number of plans for new material in 1988.

Later this year, Eclipse will be adapting Clive Barker's ***Books of Blood*** into graphic novels. The first book is set to debut in August.

Fans of Eclipse's ***Aztec Ace*** and ***New Wave*** titles will be pleased to hear that 1988 will bring a return of both. Aztec Ace will play a major part in ***Total Eclipse***, then will move on to his own title. New Wave will be revived under a new title with new writer Steve Gerber taking the book in a very different direction.

Following up on the success of ***Airboy***, Eclipse will be bringing out an updated version of another old character, the ***Black Terror.***

The biggest event on the Eclipse schedule, though, is perhaps its strangest graphic novel. Set for summer release, the graphic novel will focus on the Christic Institute's investigation into 25 years of covert action. The Christic Institute is a lobbying body who's suing 29 men, claiming that they are part of a secret team that has had a covert racket going on with government knowledge and approval for 25 years. Working together for the first time on this graphic novel will be Alan Moore and Bill Sienkiewicz, who will be doing one of two stories in the graphic album.

And, of course, there's ***Total Eclipse***, the comic that celebrates Eclipse's ten years of business by uniting as many of the various characters published by Eclipse as is possible in five issues. This special series begins in May by Marv Wolfman, Bo Hampton and Willie Blyberg.

What is the reason for Eclipse's success? Dean Mullaney feels there's a pretty simple answer: "We were founded on the goal of letting creators keep their rights. I think it's criminal the way companies keep the copyrights and pay people off to sell their rights for their creations. People do their best work when that work is theirs--and that's what makes Eclipse successful."

HOT PICKS FROM ECLIPSE

Because of the variety of material published by Eclipse, there is no "house style" which will appeal to every reader. Instead, it is safe to say, that Eclipse publishes at least a couple of titles that should appeal to most readers, no matter what kind of comics they prefer.

This is Eclipse's tenth anniversary, and they are celebrating with their first big crossover series, ***Total Eclipse.*** This is a five issue series, starting in May, which will serve as an excellent introduction to many of Eclipse's most popular characters like Airboy, Miracleman, Aztec Ace, Masked Man, the Liberty Project, Valkyrie, Skywolf and Prowler. This super-series will be written by veteran writer Marv Wolfman. The excellent art is provided by Bo Hampton and Willie Blyberg. This is going to be the big project from Eclipse this year, and will serve as an outstanding introduction to Eclipse's best characters for new readers and as a great adventure for Eclipse fans. This is one comic that you should not miss!

Fans of outstanding action and adventure are encouraged to check out ***Airboy,*** by Chuck Dixon and Tim Truman's excellent ***Scout***, both are among the best comics on the stands today. Both series also have several spinoff titles) ***Valkyrie*** and ***Skywolf*** for ***Airboy*** and ***Scout War Shaman*** and ***New America*** from ***Scout.***)

Alan Moore fans are encouraged to check out his excellent ***Miracleman.*** It is a fantastic reworking of the old Captain Marvel mythos. The early issues will be collected into large volumes that are a must for any Alan Moore fan.

Fans of Japanese manga should check out the fine Eclipse manga line, including ***Area 88, Mai, Kamui*** and ***Lum.*** Also highly recommended is Scott McLeod's great ***Zot!*** While this is not a reprint of a Japanese comic, it is influenced by them and is great fun.

XYR is an interesting new twist; it is a "choose your own ending" type comic that looks very good.

For those looking for something different, ***Tales of the Beanworld*** and ***Cynicalman*** both come highly recommended.

The best thing to do is check out anything by Eclipse that looks interesting. No other publisher does the variety of comics that Eclipse does, and for the most part, the quality of their comics is above-average.

First Comics

For a company with such a major role in today's comics industry, it's surprising just how new to the comics field First Comics actually is. First Comics' origins only date back some six years; "March marks our sixth anniversary as a company," said Rick Oliver, editorial director of First. "It all started with our publisher Rick Obadiah, who was a producer who produced the science-fiction play ***Warp***."

Rick Obadiah and First co-founder Mike Gold decided that ***Warp*** would make a great comics concept; after talking with some of the other companies, they decided it would be better to do ***Warp*** themselves rather than sign it over

to another comic.

The two were advised that it would be just about as easy to start a company with an entire line of publications as it would to start a company for a single book, so First Comics was born. "It started with ***Warp*** as our first title, followed by the resurrection of ***E-Man***, ***Jon Sable Freelance***, and ***American Flagg!*** as our first releases," Oliver said.

Not all of First's titles have been as successful as the company might have liked. "There was the ill-fated ***Mars*** series and ***Starslayer***, which we did for a while after Mike Grell took it away from Pacific," Oliver explained. While Starslayer may not have been as successful as First would have liked, the series did indirectly give birth to a successful First Comic, ***Grimjack***. "***Grimjack*** began as a backup in ***Starslayer***, and we noticed that sales went up because of the backup strip," Oliver explained. ***Grimjack*** soon became a First title on its own. "As far as I know, ***Grimjack*** was Tim Truman's first work in comics; previously, he'd been working for TSR Games. Now Tim's virtually a comics company to himself."

Nexus and ***Badger***, two of First Comics' most successful titles, came to them by a stroke of good luck. The titles were originally published by Capital Comics, a subsidiary of a comics distributor. "It was a great stroke of good fortune that these titles came to us," Oliver said. "The previous publisher had real expertise as a distributor, but they just couldn't make the numbers work for a publishing company. It was great for us to get those books; I make no secret of the fact that ***Nexus*** is my very favorite comic book title of all time. Mike Baron does incredible work, and First is very glad he's doing a lot of it for us."

The two titles continue to grow in popularity for First Comics. "***Badger*** sales have been particularly strong," Oliver said. "In a market where many books are gradually losing sales, ***Badger*** is increasing in sales very noticeably every issue."

"One of the things that makes these titles so good," Oliver explained," is that Mike Baron has a plan for all these books.

"When we took over ***Nexus***, we had a story conference with Mike that explains just what I mean. That was just when Mike was beginning the Nexus-as-Elvis storyline where Nexus became reclusive, addicted to drugs--the whole Elvis route. We told Mike that we didn't know if the readers were really ready for that, but as Mike began to explain it to us, we saw that this wasn't just something he had come up with. Mike had been sowing the seeds for this storyline ever since ***Nexus*** began. He plans so many things into his books that it's incredible."

It's not just superlative writing that makes so many First titles, including ***Nexus***, so successful. The artists who work for First certainly contribute to the books success. "Steve Rude is a phenomenal artist, and he brings just as much to ***Nexus*** as Mike does. In fact, sometimes Steve has to rein in Mike's ideas a little bit, keep them more in line with what the two of them envision for the character."

Another creator who helped make First's success in the early days was Mike Grell, who had been working for DC on ***Warlord*** and had then moved onto Pacific to do ***Starslayer***. "He was still writing ***Warlord*** when he came to First," Rick Oliver said. "He and Mike Gold were good friends at DC, which is how he ended up getting involved with First. He brought us the concept for ***Jon Sable Freelance***, and we jumped on it."

The title was a breakthrough for First; it was a gritty, realistic series in a time when no other publisher was focusing on gritty, realistic series. "When everyone else talked about doing realistic series taking place in real time," Oliver said, "we were amused, because we had been doing that for four years. Our characters get older, they get hurt, they have to take it easy for a while."

Rick Oliver has a theory as to just why it is that First Comics puts so much emphasis on realism and sophistication in its storylines. "First

Comics was formed by a bunch of thirty-year-old-guys," Oliver explained," who wanted to create comics for thirty-year-old guys. They weren't trying to do kids' comics."

One of its most sophisticated and mature titles was ***American Flagg!*** by Howard Chaykin. "I think ***American Flagg!*** was one of the biggest surprises in the industry," Oliver said. "Its success surprised everyone--even us. When we first saw it, we knew that it was good, but we didn't foresee the success that it achieved. I don't think even Howard Chaykin thought it would do as well as it did. We were afraid it was too different. It's success is due almost entirely to Howard Chaykin--he set the direction for this book, and then maintained it."

A large part of First's success has been brought about by the fact that their books are creator-owned and present the creators' unique visions. "We're not a vanity press," Oliver said, "but we do have such

First Comics

strong creator-driven properties that when those creators leave the properties or cut back their involvement, it's been met with resistance. It's hard for someone to try to be Howard Chaykin on ***American Flagg!***--and I'll admit in retrospect that some of what we did on Flagg when Howard was gone was pretty lame--but the fans want the concepts to continue. This is one of the reasons that creators bring their creations to us, though; they know that the creation is theirs and they'll get the money they deserve for it, even if they grow tired of it and move on to something else."

Since the First titles are creator-owned, the creators gain from non-comics projects as well. "When ***Sable*** went to television, Mike Grell made some very nice money for his creation--and it's money that he deserved!"

First Comics does not try to create a "house style," Oliver explained. "When you look at some company's books, they all begin to look the same. It's for the benefit of a large company; if Artist A can't do the book that month, Artist B can and no one will really notice any difference because the style is virtually the same. That's fine for a company producing a homogenized product, but that's not what First is trying to do. We want each of our books to have its own feel and its own look."

Another source of success for First was the Michael Moorcock material. ***Elric*** had begun as a Marvel graphic novel, but the Moorcock material soon found a new home at First. "We've done very well with that material," Oliver said, "and part of the reason why, I think, is that everyone who's been involved with that material has really loved the Moorcock source stories. I think everyone who's done a Moorcock book for us has been a Moorcock fan, and that makes them work a little harder at doing something that other Moorcock fans would enjoy."

First also got involved with the growing graphic novel market very quickly, first with its adaptation of the ***Beowulf*** legend, then with ***Time Beavers.*** One graphic novel series that Rick Oliver is particularly proud of, however, is the ***Oz*** series by Eric Shanower. "The ***Oz*** books are another personal favorite of mine. When people outside the industry ask me what I do for a living, I show them the ***Oz*** books and say 'I do this.' It's material for a much broader audience, and it's very successful because it's faithful to the original material."

First Comics was one of the first comics companies to offer trade paperback reprintings of some of its more successful comics material, beginning with ***American Flagg!*** First offered a graphic album collecting the first three comics issues into one story, complete with extra art, and it met with a great deal of critical and sales success. "Howard may have always had this in mind," Oliver said, "but it certainly was brilliant on his part to package ***American Flagg*** into a series of three-issue segments. They become a natural for repackaging as a graphic novel, and they have complete storylines. Furthermore, ***American Flagg*** lends itself to that format--it doesn't look like just any other comic book!"

That's one thing First is very strong on--making its graphic novels look truly like graphic novels. "We don't want them to look like just another big comic book. A graphic novel has to be different, it has to be special, and it has to look like something more than just another comic book," Oliver explained.

First was also a comic innovator in that it was the first American comics company to package Japanese manga in comics form for an American audience. The success of its first effort, ***Lone Wolf and Cub,*** was phenomenal. "We intentionally turned ***Lone Wolf and Cub*** into a media event," Oliver said, "because we wanted people to notice this book. The Japanese comics format is different and we wanted readers to know that this was not just another comic book. We wanted the package to be so attractive that people would pick it up just to see what it was-- so we hired Frank Miller to do the covers and write introductions. The package helped sell that first issue to people who might have skipped over it otherwise--but it was the high quality of the book itself that makes those readers keep coming back issue after issue. No one at First foresaw the degree of success ***Lone Wolf and Cub*** achieved. It's our single best-selling comic book ever."

To make the book more accessible to an American market, First made ***Lone Wolf and Cub*** a larger comic book. "In Japan, readers get 100 and 200 page comics, but here, readers get 24 or 32 pages of story. Japanese comics often have no dialogue for pages--they intend the reader to flip quickly from panel to panel, from page to page, moving at a different pace as the action changes," Oliver explained. "We wanted to give the American reader a feel for that by giving him more pages in each issue."

Preparing each issue of ***Lone Wolf and Cub*** is a multi-step process. "We have a two-step translation process for the book," Oliver said. "First, it's translated in Japan by an American who is fluent in Japanese. Then the translation is mailed here, where our art director Alex Wald, who is able to read Japanese, refines it even further and throws in extra background material. He makes the material make more sense to an American audience. Then we have to flop the pages to make them read from left-to-right; in some cases, we even have to flop individual panels back again to make them look right. In Japan, samurai are never left-handed, so we have to flop all those panels back again to keep him right-handed. The Japanese studio helps us there. After all this is done, we have to do the balloons

First Comics

and the sound effects. The book is very, very involved, and the production is just about as involved as the book itself."

Currently, First has another Japanese manga, ***Neo Mazinger*** by Go Nagai, scheduled for summer release. "Mazinger was the original giant robot," Oliver said. "There was a cartoon shown in the 60's, ***Tranzor Z***, which was actually a translation for an American audience of ***Mazinger Z***. It's probably Go Nagai's most famous creation, and it is the source material for ***Transformers, Robotech,*** and every other giant robot concept.

"It's not just a giant robot book, though; it has a giant robot in it, but it is much more. It's also not just a reprint; it is an all-new work done for simultaneous publication, in full painted color, in both America and Japan. ***Neo Mazinger*** will be quite an event."

Another major project for First is ***Crossroads,*** the five-issue series that allows several of First's characters to interact with one another. "This series is something people have been asking for for a long time. Our characters don't exist in the same universe, but readers have asked for storylines that allow our characters to meet. They don't exist in the same world, but we've come up with a really unique storyline that allows some of our characters paths to cross without having to alter the reality of each character's world."

First is also planning another series, ***Team Yankee,*** for the summer; the premise of this series is "what if the Russians decided to launch a conventional attack on Western Europe? ***Team Yankee*** is written by the former NATO commander, H. W. Coyle, and is being done in conjunction with Berkley Books, who is publishing the novel. That same month, we'll do a six-issue weekly limited series. There's a reason for that--most people agree that even a conventional war between the superpowers wouldn't last more than a couple of weeks because we'd deplete all our available resources by then. That's the feel we want to get in the book; this is a ten-day war, and we're following one tank batallion from the beginning of the war until the end." The new series will be adapted by David Drake, a well-known science fiction author who has done ***Hammer's Slammers*** (ironically, a future-tank-warfare series) and illustrated by Rod Whigham, formerly the artist of ***GI Joe*** for two years."

First also has plans for a new ***Classics Illustrated*** series; "We're going to adapt some of the same books that were done in the original classics series," Oliver said, "but we're going to be doing some new classics as well." The new series will be done in prestige-format, and should begin at the end of 1988 or early 1989.

When asked what First's philosophy was, Rick Oliver was quick to say that "here at First, we believe that comics are for everyone. Comics are not a genre, comics are a medium; they're a legitimate story-telling medium for any sort of story you want to tell, as long as you use the medium correctly to tell that story. In this country, comics have the stigma of being literature for adolescent males; there's no reason that comics can't expand beyond that. They've done so overseas, and we want them to expand beyond that market here."

HOT PICKS AT FIRST

First's hottest title right now is certainly ***Crossroads,*** the five-issue limited series that so many fans have so eagerly awaited. For many readers, ***Crossroads*** can serve as an introduction to various First Comics characters they normally don't read.

Badger remains a very hot series for First; with the ***Badger*** graphic novel scheduled for release at about the same time as this ***CSN Special,*** you can expect to see even stronger interest in this bizarre and unique strip in the near future.

Nexus is universally praised as one of the finest comics published; this title is very hot with fans looking for mature, sophisticated, thought-provoking comics material. Steve Rude's art has quite a following in itself

The Michael Moorcock adaptations are very hot with fantasy and sword-and-sorcery fans; Moorcock's fantasy is not just Robert E. Howard ripoffs; instead, it's imaginative, complex fiction quite unlike any other fantasy/S&S creation out there today.

Howard Chaykin's American Flagg! has been very hot since Chaykin returned to First and revitalized the concept of Flagg; this is a book for mature readers, but it is certainly quite unlike anything else on the stands today.

First also has a number of very successful graphic albums and graphic novels in print; perhaps its most successful is the three-volume reprinting of the ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*** series in color. The Nexus graphic album, reprinting several of the very-hard-to-find early issues of ***Nexus*** in black-and-white, also remains a great seller. Howard Chaykin's original ***Time^2*** series of graphic novels is available only in the graphic novel format; fans of ***American Flagg*** will find the material in these graphic novels equally pleasing.

Jim Starlin's ***Dreadstar*** began at Epic, but it has remained just as hot since its move to First some two years ago. Starlin writes the adventures of ***Dreadstar,*** which are illustrated by the very talented team of Luke McDonnell and Val Mayerik.

Kitchen Sink

Kitchen Sink Press is one of the oldest of the independent publishers. According to publisher and founder Denis Kitchen, "We go way back to 1969. This is our nineteenth year, which makes us one of the real pioneers in the business. In fact, I think it was Mike Gold who told me recently that nobody, no individual has been a publisher longer than I have. I challenged him on that, and he said 'OK, name someone who has been at it longer,' and I really couldn't, really couldn't. Because the people ho are the publishers at Marvel and DC haven't been around that long even though their companies have. So that was kind of a sobering thought, but longevity is one of the things we do stress, along with integrity and quality."

Kitchen Sink started out as a publisher of what were known as "underground comix." These were generally "adults-only" titles that dealt with and were aimed at the counter-culture (or "hippie") audience during the late sixties and seventies. Kitchen Sink was one of the first to publish works by Robert Crumb, Jay Lynch, Skip Williamson among others (including Dennis Kitchen who is himself one of the bigger talents as a writer and artist among the underground creators.).

But early on Kitchen Sink diversified and started doing more mainstream comics as well. "The first major coup in that regard was Will Eisner's ***The Spirit*** in 1971," says Kitchen, "That was an important diversification for us. After that we started reprinting classic comics by others including Milton Caniff. We did ***Steve Canyon*** and we're doing ***Male Call***. We've obtained the rights to reprint virtually everything that Harvey Kurtzman ever did, except his issues of ***MAD*** comics, which Russ Cochran is doing. We've also acquired the rights to represent Al Capp's ***Li' Abner***, which we will do in a 54-volume series over the next ten years. That begins in April. We're also doing the complete ***Flash Gordon*** beginning later this year. We're going slightly out-of-order with that one, beginning with 1952. That was a very interesting year for the strip. Harvey Kurtzman wrote it and laid it out and people like Jack Davis and Frank Frazetta, among others, helped Dan Berry doing the penciling and inking. We're going to go back after that to the beginning of the strip by Alex Raymond."

Possibly the most significant contribution of Kitchen Sink's classic comics line remains the chronological reprinting of Will Eisner's ***The Spirit***. According to Kitchen, "***The Spirit*** is a unique and special strip in many ways. Newspaper comics traditionally were in the comic strip format. But Will Eisner came up with the idea in 1940 to give newspapers a comic book supplement. That had never been done before. So he created these eight-page supplements where the ***Spirit*** would be the lead feature with strips such as ***Lady Luck*** and ***Mr. Mystic***. That was a cull-color supplement that ran in newspapers across the country from 1940 until 1952. So it was unique in that regard." ***The Spirit*** was a ground-breaking strip in other regards as well. Unlike other comics at the time which were aimed at a younger audience that read the comic books, the ***Spirit*** newspaper supplement was read by adults. The result is that the strip displayed a grittiness, realism and sophistication otherwise not found in comics. This older audience, along with the enormous talent and imagination of Eisner and his studio, made for perhaps the best comic book series ever created.

created. Eisner's storytelling, layout, design, panel construction, use of lighting and angles have influenced literally dozens of today's top creative talents. Frank Miller, for example, sights Eisner and ***The Spirit*** as a major influence on his work. His work on ***Daredevil*** and ***Dark Knight*** are very much influenced by Eisners ***The Spirit*** in terms of storytelling technique. ***The Spirit*** monthly comic is presenting in chronological order all the strips from the end of World War II on. (Like many artists at the time, Eisner took time off from the strip during the war for military service.) Kitchen says that he plans to eventually collect the strip into a deluxe format, similar to the Russ Cochran ***EC Library***. "But, for now," he says, "we want ***The Spirit*** to be available in an inexpensive format in as complete a chronology as possible."

But representing the classics isn't all that Kitchen Sink does. "We are also publishing what are, I think, some of the best contemporary comics as well. ***Xenozoic Tales*** is one of them. That's by Mark Schultz, who has a terrific style. We do ***Death Rattle*** which is a horror/science fiction series. We're doing ***Twist***, which is a humor magazine and is published twice a year. In March we're debuting a new series called ***Kings in Disguise*** by James Vance and Dan Burr. That book has several outstanding covers by guest artists. The first issue has a great cover painting by Steve Rude, the second issue has a Harvey Kurtzman cover illustration, and number three's is by Will Elder. We've some other surprise artists planned for future issues."

Kitchen Sink was also one of the first publishers of Graphic Novels

Kitchen Sink

with the publication of ***A Contract With God*** by Will Eisner in 1978. Says Kitchen, "That book was really a forerunner, which I don't think it gets credited with enough. With ***Maus, American Splendor*** and ***Dark Knight*** getting all the attention, I think that it is easy to forget that Eisner was an innovator there, as in so many areas in comics. But the book is still in print, along with his subsequent graphic novels.

We've done the ***Spirit Color Albums, A Signal From Space, The Art of Will Eisner, The Outer Space Spirit*** (by Eisner and Wally Wood), ***New York The Big City, The Building and The Dreamer***, all by Eisner. We're getting ready to publish his latest work, ***A Life Force***, and he's already working on another book after that. So we'll probably be doing two or three books by Will each year. Some of them will be new, some reprints. I consider Eisner to be our prime talent as there is not only this enormous amount of classic material by him, but here's this guy who has been in the field for sixty years and he's still creating some of the most exciting material around. He's one of the greats of the comics medium, truly one of a kind."

Kitchen described some of the projects that are coming up in the next few months from Kitchen Sink. "When we go back to the Alex Raymond ***Flash Gordons*** we will probably do at least the first 75 in full color. We discovered some incredibly perfect full color proofs that the Raymond family possessed. The next Harvey Kurtzman project, after ***Betsy's Buddies*** will probably be the complete ***Hey Look!*** material from the 1940s. Then the next massive Kurtzman project that we'll jump into will be the complete ***Humbug!***. That was a satyrical magazine he did after leaving ***MAD***, which he co-created and edited for the first 24 issues. ***Humbug!*** was done in the late fifties and was an inspiration to a whole generation of artists. Robert Crumb, for example, always talks about how ***Humbug!*** changed his life. He thought, I guess naively, that ***Humbug!*** would eclipse ***MAD***, which it never did. They came out with a dozen or so issues with really prime material by himself and the likes of Jack Davis, Will Elder, Wally Wood, Arnold Ross and the list goes on and on. So we'll be reprinting that in it's entirety along with some previously unpublished material from Harvey's archives. That should be starting later this year.

Will Eisner's next book will be called ***Will Eisner's City Sketchbook***. That should be out in the fall."

Denis Kitchen concluded saying this about Kitchen Sink Press: "I think that we don't underestimate our audience. We are very seriously interested in comics and comics history. We basically produce books that we enjoy ourselves. We're not interested in making a fast buck by exploiting the latest superhero concept. We're not interested in doing a ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*** parody. Kitchen Sink Press is basically here for the long run. We want the books with our imprint to be something that we're proud of. We give them all a lot of tender-loving care

Kitchen Sink

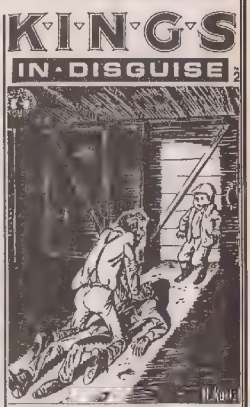
to insure quality. We treat out talent fairly. We treat the artists like respected authors, which we think they are. And we package the books and comics with great care in terms of paper, printing and production values that they deserve. We've been doing that now for almost twenty years. We've never grown to challenge DC or Marvel, but that really hasn't been our goal. Our goal is to preserve the best comics from the past and to present some of the best talent of today. That's our publishing philosophy in a nutshell.'

HOT PICKS FROM KITCHEN SINK

There are not many publishers that you can say this about, but you really can not go wrong picking up anything with the Kitchen Sink imprint. Their classic comics line is just that. There is no questioning the enormous talent and influence of such creators and strips as Al Capp's ***Li'Abner,*** Milton Caniff's ***Steve Canyon*** and ***Male Call, Flash Gordon*** by Alex Raymond with later trips by Kurtzman, Frazzetta, Davis and Elder, ***Jungle Book*** and ***Hey Look!*** (due later this year) by Harvey Kurtzman. These creators are to comics what Shakespeare, Hemingway and Faulkner are to literature. Due to the large size and high production values, these collections can be more expensive than the latest issue of a mainstream comic, but you get what you pay for.

Every comic fan should experience ***The Spirit.*** Will Eisner certainly must be among the top three comic book talents of all time. The techniques he developed continue to have enormous influence on today's comic creators. With four stories per issue, at $2.00 ***The Spirit*** is not only an outstanding comic but an outstanding value. And for the most part these stories retain a freshness and excitement that make them as entertaining and innovative today as when they were originally produced. Eisner was and remains one of the true innovators of the medium, and ***The Spirit*** was a strip that was years ahead of its time. In many ways, comics have yet to catch up!

For a look at the direction that comics are heading, one only has to check out any of Eisner's new work. His books are true graphic novels (as opposed to just being big comic books). ***A Contract With God, A Signal From Space, The Dreamer, The Building*** and his upcoming ***A Life Force*** all come highly recommended.



Kitchen Sink's new titles are also above-average. ***Xenozoic Tales*** is excellent science fiction adventure very much in the Wally Wood/EC Comics tradition. The upcoming ***Kings in Disguise,*** a story of a young boys travels and adventures during the depression, looks to be well worth checking out as well.

NOW Comics

Now is a relatively new company, started in 1985 by publisher Tony Caputo. Says editor Fred Schiller, "Tony was very active in comics fandom. He had published a number of fanzines (fan magazines) and started NOW Comics using some of the people he had worked with on his fan projects. The first NOW Comics were ***Vector, Eb'n, Rust, The Adventures of Ralph Snart*** and a superhero team book called Syphons. Vector was unique in that it predated First Comics' ***Shatter*** as the first comic composed mostly on computer. Unfortunately sales weren't high enough for us to continue publication on it.' Only one of these early titles, ***Rust,*** is still being published, although plans are in the works to revive ***Ralph Snart*** this summer.

The problem that NOW faced was that it began during a boom period along with some fifty other new comic publishers. If the new company was to survive it needed something to distinguish it from the dozens of other companies popping up. Caputo found that something in a licensed product. It is two twenty-year old Japanese cartoons that haven t been seen in America for years, but ***Astro Boy*** and ***Speed Racer*** in particular still have substantial followings and great appeal for new readers.

Astro Boy was reintroduced to American comic readers with new stories and art by Ken Steacy. Steacy has worked for many top companies including Marvel, DC, Comico before doing ***Astro Boy*** for NOW. He has a vibrant, unique style. Steacy is also considered one of the best colorists in comics today.

Speed Racer has had some changes in its creative staff. The book is currently being written by Lamar Waldron and illustrated by Tom Morgan, who previously worked for Marvel drawing ***Captain America. Speed Racer*** has been extremely successful and there has been a large ***Speed Racer Special*** and a spin-off series, featuring Speed's mysterious brother, ***Racer X.*** The series kicks off with a prestige-format special in May

NOW Comics

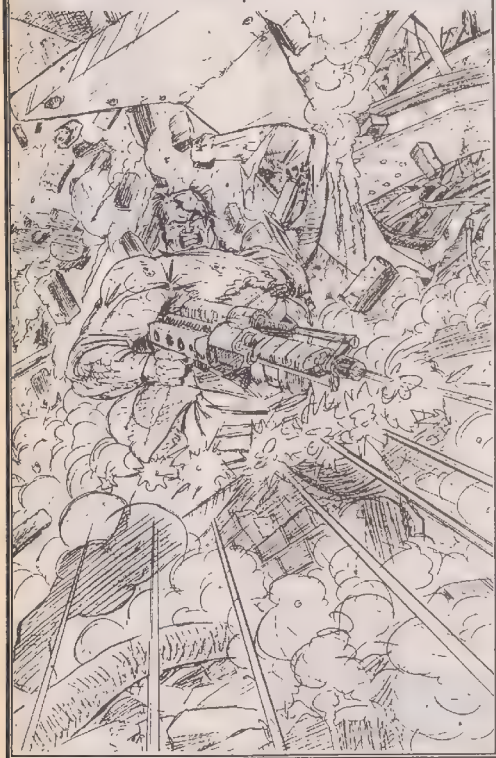
and a regular monthly series starting in June. It will be written by Fred Schiller and illustrated by George Booker.

NOW Comics will also be publishing a second monthly ***Speed Racer*** title. In June there will be a second ***Speed Racer Special.*** This will be 50 pages and will be representing in English the original Japanese manga (comic) upon which the ***Speed Racer*** cartoon series was based. Unlike most Japanese reprints and the original manga, the second ***Speed Racer Special*** will be in full color, with new colors by Ken Steacy. The following month NOW will continue the Japanese stories in ***Speed Racer Classics.*** The series will be monthly, black and white like other Japanese comics being translated.

However, NOW plans to give ***Speed Racer*** fans a giant helping each month. The comic will be squarebound, with heavy covers each issue will be around 200 pages. The comic should sell for around $3.50. If you missed the first ***Speed Racer Special*** last winter, NOW will be reprinting it this summer. It was all new material and features a technical manual from the Mock 5.

NOW hopes to follow and even exceed the success they had with their first two licensed books with three more. NOW has obtained the rights to do ***Terminator, The REal Ghostbusters,*** and ***Fright Night*** comic series.

The Terminator is based on the popular science fiction adventure film that starred Arnold Shwarzenegger. According to writer Schiller, this series won't directly adapt the movie or planned sequel, but will be all-new adventures that take place in the year 2031. The book is being illustrated by Tony Akins and Jim Brozman, who have previously worked with Schiller on ***Rust.*** The monthly color series will start in June. NOW is negotiating for the rights to do the official comic adaptation of the next ***Terminator*** movie when it is released next year, but nothing is definite yet.



The Real Ghostbusters, based on the hit movie and animated series, will be written by James Van Hise and illustrated by Jack Tobias. Van Hise has been around comics since the mid 1960's and published the ***Rocket's Blast Comic Collector,*** one of the largest and most-popular comic fan magazines. The series will begin in June.

Finally, NOW is doing an adaptation of ***Fright Night*** as a special this summer and will begin a monthly ***Fright Night*** comic soon afterward. In fact, the first three issues will be an adaptation of ***Fright Night II*** which will be released in movie theaters this summer.

HOT PICKS AT NOW

NOW is a new company that came upon a very successful formula: get licensed properties that the readers are familiar with, and do quality adaptations designed to appeal to a wide variety of comic readers. The result is that even readers who have never heard of NOW Comics are certainly going to be familiar with the characters and premise of many of their titles.

NOW Comics

Fans of Japanese manga and animation should certainly check out ***Astro Boy*** and ***Speed Racer.*** Steacy is now doing the writing and art on ***Astro Boy*** and is providing the book with a new, dynamic style and great colors. The regular ***Speed Racer*** is well-done adventure. The new team of Lamar Waldron and Tom Morgan are providing the most enjoyable issues yet. The upcoming ***Speed Racer Classics*** will be the biggest monthly comic around at 200 pages and fans of the series in particular will enjoy seeing the original series on which many of the cartoon's plotlines were based. The ***Racer X*** spin off looks very strong. Schiller says that there is tremendous interest in the mysterious characters. This is very different from the regular ***Speed Racer*** book. It is grittier and has more action. It is a spy comic, in the tradition of the early James Bond pictures and the Steranko **S.H.I.E.L.D.** series for Marvel. Whether you are a ***Speed Racer*** fan or not, fans of good action adventure comics should definitely check out ***Racer X.***

Of the new books NOW is launching this summer, ***The Terminator*** looks to be the hottest. This is a very popular premise that, like Dark Horse's ***Aliens*** comic, lends itself perfectly to the medium. This could be the surprise hit of the summer and readers are advised to check it out.

NOW's oldest remaining original title ***Rust*** is one of the more unique and innovative comics on the stands today. It is an unusual story, unusually told. ***Rust*** isn't for everybody, but if you're in the mood for something different and good, you might want to check it out. Many will be glad to see ***Ralph Snart*** back. We certainly can use all the good humor comics we can get these days.

Starblaze

While Starblaze is one of the largest publishers of graphic novels and collections around, it is an imprint of the Donning publishing company. Donning is a major book publisher with several lines including cookbooks, novels, nonfiction, history books and travel books. Starblaze publishes science fiction and fantasy trade paperbacks as well as the graphic novels and art books. The company was founded in 1978 and the company's first editor was Kelly Freas, one of SF's best and most celebrated artists. Starblaze has published works by Robert Asprin, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Robert Silverberg and C.J. Cherrah.

Starblaze started its line of high-quality graphic albums in 1984 with ***Elfquest*** by Wendi and Richard Pini. This was self-published by the Pini's Warp Graphics as a black and white comic and was one of the first successful independent comics published for the direct market. Starblaze has collected the entire first ***Elfquest*** sage, originally published in twenty issues, into four color volumes.

Next came ***Mythadventures.*** This

Starblaze

Innovative fantasy comic is based on Robert Asprin's popular series of books, which are also published by Starblaze. Asprin and artist Phil Foglio adapted his books into a comic series for Warp, and these were also collected into a large color volume by Starblaze. Two volumes of the books have been published and a third is in the works.

Starblaze has also produced six graphic novels in a series based on Asprin and Lyn Abbey's popular ***Thieves' World*** books. These are black and white on high-quality paper and are also among the least-expensive at $4.95 each. ***Duncan and Mallory*** is another graphic based on Asprin's novels. It is illustrated by Mel White. The popular fantasy series about a guy and his dragon has two volumes available with a third due in May.

Phil Foglio not only illustrates the popular ***Mythadventures*** volumes but also does his own sf/adventure/comedy series ***Buck Godot.*** Says Jean Campbedd, editor, "Phil has grown tremendously as an artist over the last couple of years. He not only does the graphic line, but illustrations for Asprin's ***Myth*** books as well." Foglio has completed two ***Buck Godot*** books thus far.

The Gates of Ivers is another graphic album series. These are adaptations of the C.J. Cherrah novels by Jane Fancher. There have been two published to date. Says Campbell, "Dherrah recently called Fancher one of the best colorists in the business and I would certainly have to agree. These books stand apart from most other graphic novels in the high quality of her art." Another series, ***Thorgal*** is a translation from the popular Belgium series.

ONe of Starblaze's most popular collections is ***Mage*** by Matt Wagner. These are large, high-quality collections of the ***Mage*** comic by Wagner published by Comico. There have been two large volumes released so far.

Starblaze will soon be releasing the third in their popular Robotech series.

A project that must be of interest to fans of great art is the ***"Starblaze Classics"*** series. These are a series of classic novels that are being represented in lavishly illustrated volumes. The first book is ***The Thief of Bagdag*** by P. Craig Russell and was released late last year. The next, is ***Metropolis*** by Fritz Lang and illustrated by Mike Kaluta. This is about 160 pages, with over 40 new illustrations by kaluta in both black and white and color. Upcoming is ***The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*** by Howard Pyle and illustrated by Mike Grell (who recently completed a ***Green Arrow*** limited series for DC and scripts the regular monthly comic) and next fall will mark the release of a new book by Charles Vess. Each volume in the ***Starblaze Classics*** is available in a large softcover edition, a regular hardback and a deluxe signed and numbered limited edition and are full-sized books.

Summing up, Jean Campbell says: "One of the things that makes Starblaze graphic novels stand out from the rest is that we have taken several artist/author teams and published their original work. Many don't start out as graphic novels but are adapted, often by the same artist/writer team who created the piece. This creates an envi-

Starblaze

ronment for creativity and innovation."

HOT PICKS FROM STARBLAZE

Starblaze offers a line of excellent graphic albums for readers, especially fans of science fiction and fantasy. Most of their line are repackaged material of outstanding series (like ***Elfquest***, ***Mythadventures*** and ***Mage***). Starblaze has chosen quality material and generally does an outstanding job of repackaging them into first rate collections. The other two Robert Asprin adaptations, ***Thieves' World*** and ***Duncan and Mallory*** are both first rate adaptations as well.

The ***Robotech*** books are among the best material available in American on Japanese animation. There are two volumes out with a third available soon.

The ***Starblaze Classics*** series look to be very good as well. Like with the excellent illustrated ***Frankenstein*** edition by Mary Shelly and Berni Wrightson, many collectors will be getting these for the numerous illustrations by such top talent as Mike Kaluta, Charles Vess, Craig Russell and Mike Grell more so for the art than for the book. But these are handsome editions that should greatly enhance the reading enjoyment of art fans and classic book fans as well.

Starblaze has a reputation for excellent production values, printing, coloring, etc. While they publish nothing but higherpriced graphic albums and collections, they are very reasonably priced.

Eternity

Eternity's origins actually go back to the origins of another company, the now-defunct Malibu Comics, which was owned by the same corporation that now owns Eternity. Explains art director Tom Mason, "The decision was made in late 1987 to combine the Malibu and Eternity titles under the Eternity masthead and move the editorial offices out to California."

The Eternity staff remains in New York and acts as liaisons with the New York freelancers, but the editorial offices moved out west and Dave Olbrich, Tom Mason, and Chris Ulm hold the same positions they held with Malibu.

The new Eternity lineup consists of some of the more commercially successful Eternity titles; in particular Ron Lim's ***Ex-Mutants*** and ***New Humans***. They also continue to offer some of the best of the Malibu titles under the Eternity banner, including ***Dark Wolf***, ***Libby Ellis***, ***Rovers***, ***Outlander***, ***The Liberator***, ***Bloodwing***, and their popular and critically acclaimed ***The Trouble With Girls***. Other titles that were continued when Eternity moved include ***Ninja, Wild Knights***, ***Pirate Corps***, ***Yakuza***, and ***Blade of Shuriken***.

"What we tried to do was impose the Malibu philosophy of comics publishing onto the Eternity books in terms of quality, high production values, and on-time publishing schedules," says Mason.

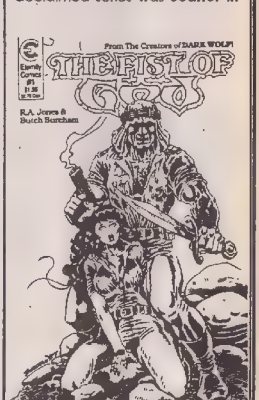
Ben Dunn created ***Ninja High School***; Dunn is also known for his work on the ***Popeye Special*** for Ocean Comics and for Eclipse titles as well as his own ***Tiger-X*** series in ***Mangazine***, a magazine which he published. Those ***Tiger-X*** stories are being reprinted from Eternity this summer. The new series will begin with a 40-page special first issue and 3 regular 32-page issues. Dunn is doing some new artwork for the series, and the work is being entirely relettered for the Eternity volume.

Eternity recently collected his stories from the first four issues of ***Ninja High School*** into a graphic album that sold out very quickly; Eternity plans a second printing. ***Ninja High School*** will continue with Eternity beginning with the fifth issue this summer; the new series will pick up where the old series left off.

Dunn is also doing the first two issues of a new Eternity series, ***Bushido***, which is being scripted by Bruce Balfour and is set for July debut.

There will be a new ***Libby Ellis*** four-issue series beginning in June, again uniting the team of Norm Dwyer and Dennis Pimple. Mason describes Ellis as "a bounty-hunter from the year 2037. She works the territory between Denver and Chicago. She works the gray areas of the law—special deliveries, acquiring things her clients cannot attain for themselves, and so on."

One of Eternity's more critically-acclaimed series was ***Scarlet in***



Eternity

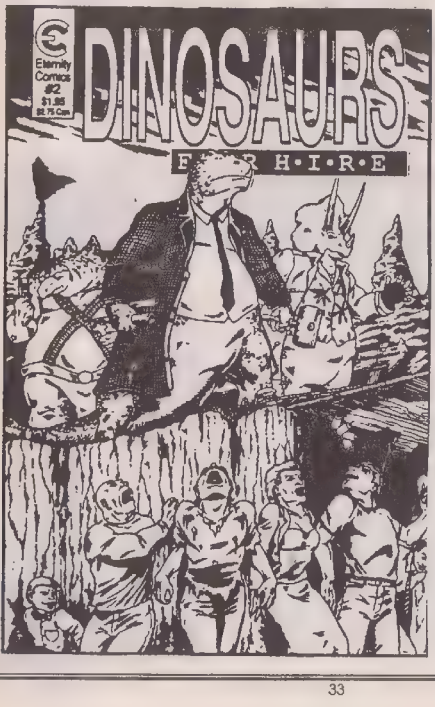
Gaslight, featuring Sherlock Holmes. Continuing the Holmes emphasis, Eternity will be featuring Arthur Conan Doyle's famous sleuth in a collection of the daily and Sunday newspaper strips from the 1950's. These were written by Edith Meiser, who also worked on the Holmes radio show, and were illustrated by Marvel artist Frank Giacoia.

The ever popular Lester Girls, star of ***The Trouble With Girls***, continues in his own successful comic; a summer annual is also planned. The annual will be written by the regular team of Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones. Mason describes the book as "a hit that continues to build steam, or heat, or is getting hot—or humid, at least... The story will be Lester Girls in outer space."

Mason describes the star as basically a James Bond type, "only James Bond makes things happen to him, whereas things just keep happening to Lester. His greatest desire is a nice, quiet, peaceful dignity, which of course he never gets. Women and adventure keep finding their way into Lester's life."

In April comes ***The Big Prize***, a six-issue mini-series subtitled ***The Timedrifter's Odyssey***. The main character wins a lottery and a trip back in time to the 1930's Hollywood, where he and his guide become stranded. He meets both celebrities and gangsters in te series written by Gerard Jones and illustrated by Bryon Carson, who also does Eternity's ***Dinosaurs for Hire***.

Dinosaurs for Hire, the adventure title written by Tom Mason and illustrated by Bryon Carson, is the unique story of three dinosaur private-eyes-turned-secret-agents in Hollywood. The book, which began in March, will pit the dinosaurs against vampires before the become involved in the Presidential campaign in the fourth issue. Mason describes the book as "a monster hit."



Another spring debut from Eternity is ***The Fist of God*** by ***Dark Wolf*** team R.A. Jones and Butch Burcham, who this time present " a rousing pulp adventure in the tradition of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Robert E. Howard."

Eternity's most popular comics are the ***New Humans*** and ***Ex-Mutants***, created by Ron Lim. Lim currently works for Marvel, where he will soon become the regular artist on ***Silver Surfer***. Eternity is starting the two books over again with #1. Both titles originated with Eternity, but quickly moved to Amazing and Pied Piper before finding a home again with Eternity last year. Beginning the series again with first issues will "clear up the mess and confusion surrounding its previous incarnation." Mason promises the new book will feature some big changes with the major characters. Graphic albums of the first series are planned.

Eternity has several large graphic albums available, including the ***Futurians*** by Dave Cockrum, ***Ninja High School*** by Ben Dunn, and the ***Ex-Mutants*** collection. There is a planned collection of two volumes offering the Ninja comic, another ***Ex-Mutants*** volume, and a collection featuring the first three issues of ***The Trouble With Girls*** in addition to the first three chapters of a Lester Girls novel that Gerard Jones had written prior to its comics publication.

A ***Dark Wolf*** collection will be offered that will feature the original Malibu four-issue limited series; there will be a bonus reprinting of the original ***Dark Wolf*** story pub-

Eternity

lished by Elite Comics in 1986.

Eternity has also picked up ***Twilight Avenger***, and will be doing all-new stories by John Wooley and Terry Tidwell.

According to Mason, Eternity's publishing philosophy is simple. "I try to publish the kinds of comics I like to read--and even more importantly, I try to publish the kinds of comics that Dave, my boss, likes to read. That's my secret of success in this business."

HOT PICKS AT ETERNITY

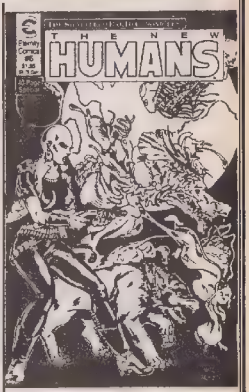
Eternity's hottest titles are the ***Ex-Mutants/New Humans*** series of comics. These books have been quite hot since they were first published some two years ago, and the addition of ***Solo Ex-Mutants***, ***Wild Knights***, and other titles to the Shattered Earth series (the master-series that includes all the ***Ex-Mutants*** related books) has only boosted interest in these volumes.

The Eternity graphic albums collecting the early issues of ***Ex-Mutants*** remain hot sellers. Other graphic album titles that are quite hot for Eternity are the ***Futurians*** (which sold out of its first printing almost immediately) and ***Ninja High School*** (which did the same). Both volumes should have second printings available soon.

The Trouble With Girls is another hot title from Eternity; with the witty plots and clever dialogue that appeal to all humor fans, this is the best ongoing humor title on the marketplace today.

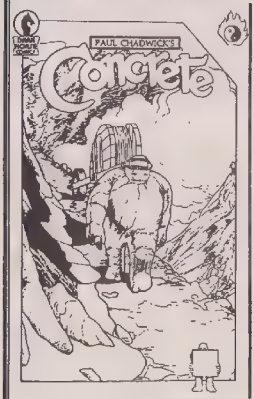
The Liberator is another hot title for Eternity; a more realistic look at a "patriotic hero," this book has quite a following.

Dark Wolf was hot as a mini-series, and remains equally hot as an ongoing comics series by the same team.



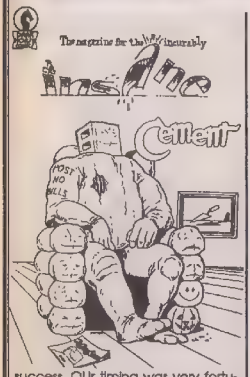
Ninja High School, soon to be an ongoing title from Eternity, also shows a great deal of promise as a hot book. The original series sold extremely well, and the new series by the same team seems to have a very avid following.

Dark Horse



Dark Horse is a relatively new company. It was started by publisher Mike Richardson in summer of 1986, at the height of the boom in black and white comics from small publishers that started with the phenomenal success of Mirage Studio's ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles***. Says editor Randy Stradley, "I had known Paul Chadwick through the pages of APA 5 for a number of years and knew he had an idea for a strip, ***Concrete*** that he was trying to sell. I talked to him about Dark Horse publishing ***Concrete***. He agreed to do eight page stories for our anthology comic, ***Dark Horse Presents***. The other strips in the first issue were Chris Warner's ***Black Cross***. The book was very well received and sold far better than we expected. We thought it would sell 5 to 10,000 and it sold over 50,000. That was just a very good time for many black and white comics. We were very flushed with

Dark Horse



success. OUr timing was very fortuitous, if we had come in even a few months later we might not have survived the first year. When the market got really overcrowded very quickly and a lot of the companies and comics that started in those next few months are not around today.'

Dark Horse's next title was another sales success, ***Boris the Bear.*** Each issue Boris killed off another batch of the latest fad characters in comics like ninjas, giant Japanese robots and ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*** rip-offs. The book was very successful and appealing to the readership by making fun of the other books they were reading at that time.

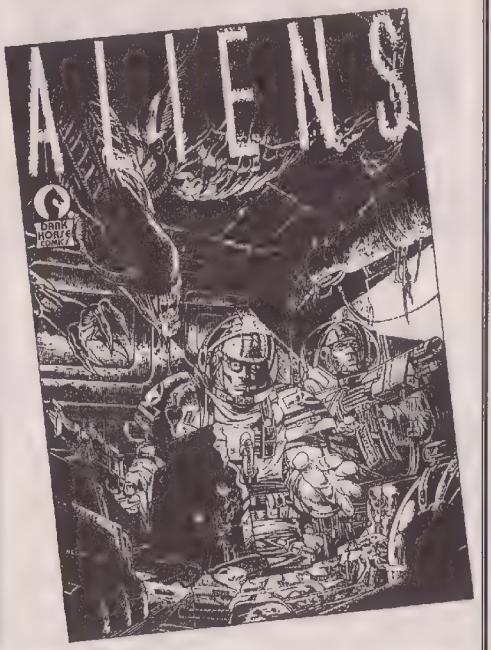
Those two initial successes got Dark Horse off to a strong start and gave them the financial ability to outbid Marvel's Epic Comics for the rights to do a regular ***Concrete*** comic by Paul Chadwick. They also released ***Trekker*** by Rob Randall. 'We've been able to attract top talent,' says Stradley, 'is that first we are willing to really share the profits with the creators, not just give them a small percentage as a royalty. So they make good money. Second, we allow our creators almost veritable creative freedom on the projects that they own.'

Concrete remains one of Dark Horse's biggest sales and critical success. 'Paul Chadwick did a few issues of ***Dazzler*** for Marvel and was working doing storyboards for motion pictures. He did the storyboards for ***Pee Wee's Big Adventure, The Philadelphia Experiment*** and the ***Ewocks*** movie. Since he started doing ***Concrete*** he has been working exclusively in comics. The strip continues to appear regularly in ***Dark Horse Presents*** as well as its own bi-monthly title which started in March, 1987. 'We are very gratified that there is a market out there for a book like ***Concrete*** which is a bit more intelligent and sensitive than superheroes pounding on each other,' says Stradley.

Another critical and commercial success for Dark Horse is ***The American*** by Mark Verheiden. 'I read the first script and it was wonderful. The best submission I had ever read. We began publication soon afterward and it has been very well received. The book has been plagued by scheduling problems, but we think they will be corrected soon and the ***American*** #4 will be out soon and the book should be back on schedule.

The ***American*** has also been optioned for a live-action television show. The option has been renewed and it is being shopped by Group W Communications for a series pilot for the fall, 1988 season. 'We don't know anything for six months,' says editor Stradley.

Currently, Dark Horse also publishes ***MECHA*** a giant Japanese robot comic and the ***Mark.*** They have also just acquired two titles from other publishers. Switching over from Renegade with #18 is the ***Flaming Carrot*** by Bob Burden and Michael Gilbert's new version of ***Mr. Monster.*** The 1940's character was first revived by Eclipse. 'With ***Mr. Monster,*** Eclipse had discontinued the color version. We picked it up as a black & white and it is doing very well. One of the things that we insisted on when we picked up ***Mr. Monster*** was that it be more new material and that it primarily be Michael Gilbert new material,' says Stradley. At Eclipse Mr. Monster served as a 'host' of several titles which were primarily reprints of old comic stories from the 1940s and 50s. In his own title,



Dark Horse

Gilbert worked with others on the art. "Michael is very hard at work producing new Mr. Monster stories. He's also taken the book in a slightly more serious tact. He starts off with the origin of Mr. Monster and so far the stories have been more serious than his last stories for Eclipse which were great, but were played more for laughs.

The deal we've worked out with Bob Burden on ***Flaming Carrot*** is that he is now publisher by name, and Dark Horse is handling the printing and distribution of the book. I think it will be a good deal for both of us. The interest in the strip is very high."

Like many of the independent publishers, Dark Horse is also starting to acquire the rights to do comic adaptation of licensed products with the comic version of ***Godzilla*** and an upcoming ***Aliens*** comic. A one-shot special published last year was successful and a six-issue English translation of a Japanese ***Godzilla*** manga. That starts in April. A new series is being considered after the adaptation ends. A ***Godzilla Portfolio*** with illustrations by Art Adams, Hilary Barta, Mike Mignola, Alan Moore, Steve Bissett, Charles Vess and others is planned for this summer.

"Our second licensed product is ***Aliens*** from 20th Century Fox. Mark Verheiden is writing it and Mark K. Nelson is illustrating it on duotone board. We have great expectations for the series. We're using some of the characters from ***Aliens*** and takes place ten years after ***Alien.*** That way we won't step on 20th Century Fox's toes in terms of continuity with a third ***Aliens*** movie which they are now working on, and when it comes out they won't step on ours. We are looking into doing the comic adaptation of the next movie coming out. ***Aliens*** will be published bi-monthly starting in April."

Upcoming in ***Dark Horse Presents*** is a strip by Geoff Darrow. "He's an American artist who has a very large following in Europe. He's had 24 graphic novels published over there as well as stuff in ***Heavy Metal.*** His first story will be in ***Dark Horse Presents*** #19.

Rick Geary will also be doing stories for the anthology and a collection reprinting his work from ***National Lampoon*** is planned. ***Crash Ryan*** by Ron Harris, which was a limited series for Epic Comics a few years back, will be continued as a regular black & white comic for Dark Horse.

Black Cross by Chris Warner started out as a feature in ***Dark Horse Presents.*** There was a ***Black Cross*** special recently published that was successful. As a result, Dark Horse will be doing a three issue ***Black Cross*** limited series. The books will be comic sized, with cardstock color covers and will be squarebound, like First's ***Lone Wolf & Cub.***

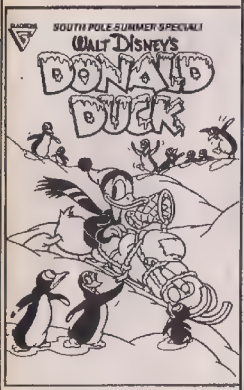
HOT PICKS AT DARK HORSE

While each book appeals to different audiences, most of Dark Horse's major titles are well-done and should be at least looked over by anyone interested in good quality comics. ***Concrete*** by Paul Chadwick and ***The American*** by Mark Verheiden are both among the best comics published today.

Their recent acquisitions and licensed books also look good. ***Flaming Carrot*** is one of the more bizarre comics available, but the offbeat hero certainly has found favor with many fans over the years. ***Aliens*** looks to be a very solid continuation of the stories started in the two successful movies. ***Mr. Monster*** is much improved in this new incarnation, and is above average suspense, horror and adventure. The ***Godzilla*** books certainly won't disappoint any fans of the King of the Monsters.

The flagship title is ***Dark Horse Presents.*** This is the book where the company tries out new ideas and successful features like ***Concrete*** and ***Black Cross*** have gone on to success in their own series. The book is always worthwhile reading and is recommended.

Gladstone



Another Rainbow started in 1981, according to editor Byron Erickson, "Russ Cochran and Bruce Hamilton were very interested in publishing a book collecting all of Carl Bark's duck oil paintings. Surprisingly, Walt Disney agreed to license the project. Up to that point Disney had never had much interest in the collector's market. But at the same time, they realized that all the Donald Duck, Uncle Scrooge and paintings of other Disney characters were floating around. He'd retired and was doing these on a commission basis for fans, private collectors. They had never been published and Disney was concerned about the ownership of the copyright on these, and were eager to get them published and those rights secured. Disney was so impressed with the quality on the book that they asked Another Rainbow what else they'd be interested in reprinting, and that's how it all got started."

They published several limited lithographs of some Bark's oil paintings and AR also started publication of the ***Carl Barks' Library*** which is a deluxe collection similar to Cochran's ***EC Library***.

In late 1985 Western Publishing, the company that had held the rights to publish ***Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck*** and many of the other Walt Disney characters, opted not to renew its license to publish the Disney Comics. They had been publishing Disney books since the early 1940s but sales and distribution had greatly eroded. So Another Rainbow approached Disney and offered to take over the properties as Gladstone.

"Disney told us we didn't have a chance at getting the license. Several major companies and publishers were competing for the rights. But we put together a distribution deal and, in the long run, it turned out to be the best deal offered. So we started Gladstone in 1985 and published regular color comics. Our first books were two giant comics, ***Uncle Scrooge Goes To Disneyland*** and ***Disneyland Birthday Party***. Those were reprints of two specials from the 50s that were reprinted as part of a celebration of Disneyland's 30th birthday. In 1986 we started four monthly comics, ***Donald Duck, Uncle Scrooge, Mickey Mouse*** and ***Walt Disney's Comics & Stories.***"

The comics were a mixture of reprints of classic strips from the 1930s and 40s and material that

was prepared overseas and have never previously been translated into English.

To understand the phenomenal popularity of ***Donald Duck*** in the comics, one must begin with Carl Barks. "I guess he must be 87 or 88 now," says Erickson, "He started out doing a number of various jobs, lumberjack and things like that. He became a cartoonist and joined Disney in 1936. Up until 1942 he worked primarily in the story department. He wrote gags for ***Donald Duck*** and other Disney cartoons. When the comics started in the 1940's they hired Carl Barks and Jack Hannah for their try-out special, ***Donald Duck finds Pirate Gold***. It was a success and Barks to do two new stories a month for their two monthly Disney titles.

Barks worked for Western until the late sixties. He wrote and drew hundreds of stories including the classic ***Donald Duck Adventures*** in the forties. He created the character of Uncle Scrooge in 1947. A regular ***Uncle Scrooge*** comic started in the early fifties and he wrote and drew the first 70 issues of it."

The new syndicated Disney animated series ***Duck Tales*** has featured several episodes that are adaptations of some of Barks' classic adventures from the comics.

Gladstone's other featured character is Mickey Mouse. This worldfamous character debuted in November 1928 and will be 60 this year. The Gladstone ***Mickey Mouse*** comic features many classic stories by Floyd Gottfredson from the 1930s. This is a leaner, meaner, tougher Mickey than Disney puts forth today as their corporate symbol. Says Erickson, "Mickey was an adventuresome guy, always getting into trouble. Gottfredson did the daily ***Mickey Mouse*** newspaper strip from 1930 until 1969. He also did many of the comic book adventures until the mid fifties. Mickey back then was more of an Indiana Jones type character, always finding trouble and getting out of it."

Based on the success of the four titles Gladstone picked up from the previous publisher, they recently created three new books, ***Donald Duck Adventures, Uncle Scrooge Adventures,*** and ***Mickey & Donald*** these titles feature more adventurous stories. They have also started publishing some very good new stories by Don Rosa. "Don has been doing a number of adven-

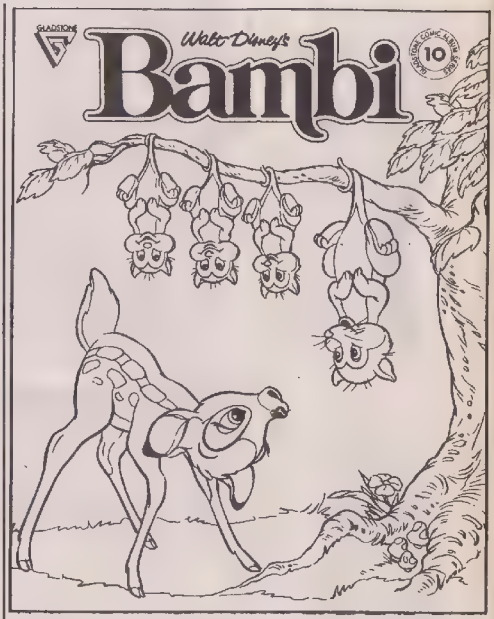
Gladstone

tures for us. Barks is a favorite of his and he's thrilled to be doing new Uncle Scrooge stories."

Gladstone is also publishing a series of comic albums, a $5.95 large paperback collections. Another new title, ***Duck Tales*** will debut in July. This is an adaptation of the syndicated Disney animated series. Scheduled for late summer is a collection of ***Donald Duck*** daily strips starting with 1938.

Planned for early fall is ***Mickey Mouse in Color*** an oversized book, 250 pages, that will reprint three long ***Mickey Mouse*** daily strip stories, complete and uncut. Plus 60 Sunday comics as well. Also included is the only Carl Barks ***Mickey Mouse*** comic story, "The Riddle of the Red Hat." Also planned are storyboards Barks did for an ultimately unproduced animated feature, "Mickey of the Mounties." There are hundreds of storyboard drawings, many in color that he did and we'll be presenting for the first time. The first 3,000 copies will have a signed plate by Gottfredson (who is now deceased but signed the plate before he passed away) and Barks. The book will be produced to be available around the time of Mickey's 60th birthday.

"The books continue to gain popularity. We're very pleased to see more and more new readers coming to the books. There's a lot more out there than superheroes," concludes Erickson.



HOT PICKS AT GLADSTONE

To understand why the Disney comics have held such a large and diversified audience for so many years one only has to check out a few issues. Gladstone has a wealth of outstanding material to choose from. For action, laffs and thrills you owe it to yourself to try an issue of ***Uncle Scrooge Adventures***, ***Donald Duck Adventures*** and ***Mickey Mouse***. It's outstanding fun for any age.

Another Rainbow's ***Carl Barks Library*** is the definitive collection of Carl Barks material. Handsomely published in sturdy editions that will last a lifetime. They aren't cheap, but for the serious collector they are well worth the price.

Comico

Comico (pronounced ko-meek-o) was started in 1982 by three college students, who weren't satisfied with what was available from the other companies at that time. Their initial efforts, books like AZ and SKROGG, were neither critical raves or best sellers. One title, Grendel, looked somewhat promising, as did it's newcomer artist/writer, Matt Wagner. However, none of the line's initial books survived more than a few issues before cancellation. The odds that the company would be around today, six years later, seemed slim indeed.

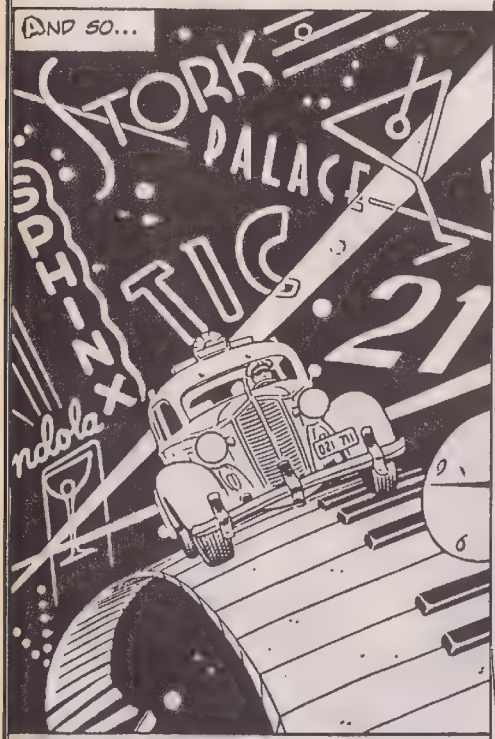
But the publishers remained undaunted by their lack of initial success and have managed to pull off one of the more impressive "comebacks" in recent comics history.

As current administrative director of Comico, Bob Schreck, puts it: "The editors realized that maybe their strengths were not in writing and illustrating their own books, but rather using their tastes, likes and dislikes to properly pick and choose properties that they would enjoy."

Their anthology title, ***Comico Primer*** served as a springboard for ***Evangeline*** which is now published by First Comics. Comico had it's first big success with the publication of the ***Elementals*** by Bill Willingham. Riding the crest of the superhero-team popularity of the time, the book was an immediate success and creator Willingham has not only continued to work on ***Elementals***, but has also done work for DC including some ***Green Lantern*** stories.

Comico also had something of a sleeper hit in ***Mage***. This was

Comico



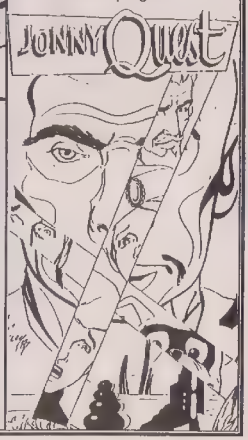
Matt Wagner's next creation for Comico, after **Grendel**, **Mage** stood out from other comics on the stands with it's offbeat premise and characters, and novel art and great color work by Wagner. The book was critically well-received, and sales slowly started climbing each issue (the opposite of the norm, where the first issue sells best and sales slide each issue and (hopefully) eventually level off). The early issues are extremely scarce and have been collected into a handsome edition reprinting the first eight issues in two volumes by Starblaze. ***Mage*** remains one of Comico's more successful titles. Wagner has worked for Marvel comics since, doing a four-issue mini-series.

One of Comico's most successful titles were their ***Robotech*** books. Comico was among the first American publishers to anticipate the popularity of Japanese comics and animation in the U.S. ***Robotech*** was originally called ***Macross: The Robotech Saga*** but changed the title to ***Robotech*** with the second issue when it was announced that Harmony Gold would be syndicating a half-hour ***Robotech*** cartoon (translated to English from the original Japanese) to U.S. television stations. This resulted in quite a sales-success in areas where the show was seen, and precipitated a boom in reprints of Japanese comics (called manga) like First's ***Lone Wolf & Cub***, Eclipse's ***Area 88***, ***Kanul and Mai the Psychic Girl***, Marvel's ***Akaira***, and NOW Comics' upcoming ***Speed Racer*** manga reprint. It has also made way for other successful adaptations of popular Japanese animated series like NOW's ***Speed Racer*** and ***Astro Boy***. Comico quickly expanded to three different ***Robotech*** titles, issuing a new ***Robotech*** comic every two weeks. As the show was replaced on many stations (a limited number were made available for U.S. syndication) the sales softened. But Comico continues to do a monthly regular ***Robotech*** comic. "We really feel a committment to the ***Robotech*** fans who have stuck with us from the early days," says Schreck, "we'll continue the book until the stories end, at least into early 1989."

Comico has been really lucky so far to find that difficult blend of aesthetic and critically appreciated material, while still trying, and many times succeeding, to finding commercially viable successes . So when we look at new material under consideration we have two criteria. One, is it something we can sell enough of to make some profits that we can put back into the project, and, two, is it something we can be proud of publishing? Is it a quality series?"

Schreck says he feels this diversity of concepts with consistency of quality is one of Comico's strengths.

The company's next cartoon adaptation was in a very different situation from ***Robotech***. ***Jonny Quest*** hadn't been on the air in many years. Most of the comic readers are too young to have ever seen the program. But the



Comico

series has long been regarded as perhaps the best television animated action-adventure series. Part of the reason is that it was a prime time (7:30 pm) series, with a bigger budget and better animation and writing; one of several successful animated prime time series such as the ***Flintstones*** and the ***Jetsons***. Most of the credit goes to Doug Widley. Based on the reputation for the original series Comico published a monthly ***Jonny Quest*** comic. "Everyone in the office had great childhood memories of this show, which we though that no one else around ever saw. But we realized that everyone we talked to about ***Jonny Quest*** would say things like "Yeah, that was the best cartoon show ever!" said Schereck. "And many of our creative people were very interested in doing a ***Jonny Quest*** comic. We hired Bill Lobes as the series writer. He knows how to make you laugh without being so silly you can't take it seriously. He can also make you cry without becoming too maudlin like some terrible, tear-jerking episode of Dallas. Betting Bill on the book, we were assured a high quality story that everybody can enjoy. We went with a round-robin with the artists on the book, since there were so many great artists who wanted to do an issue. We now have a regular team on the book, Wheatley, Hempel and Mayer doing the book. It's a book we're very proud of." William Loebs is also currently writing ***Journey*** for Fantagraphics, and ***Wasteland*** and ***Flash*** for DC. Loebs, says Schreck, has also scripted a ***Jezzable Jade*** mini-series which ties into ***Jonny Quest*** which will be scheduled soon. Adam Kubert is illustrating it. For a preview of that team, readers can check out ***Jonny Quest*** #6, which is by Loebs and Kubert.

Currently Comico has two 40-page specials scheduled for May. The first is titled ***Dana's Story.*** It will feature the origin of the popular character from the ***Robotech*** series. The cover is a photo collage by Ken Steacy. The next is called ***The Jam: Super Cool Turbo Injected Turbo Adventure#1 From Hell*** by Denny Mireault. Mireault recently completed three issues illustrating ***Grendel*** #13-16. ***The Jam*** was originally published in black & white by Matrix Graphics, and Comico's will be a full-color edition. Schreck describes the book as "a morality play comedy."

Also in May is a large paperback collection of the first twelve issues of the second run of ***Grendel.*** It will be partially recolored and have a new cover painting by the Pander Brothers.

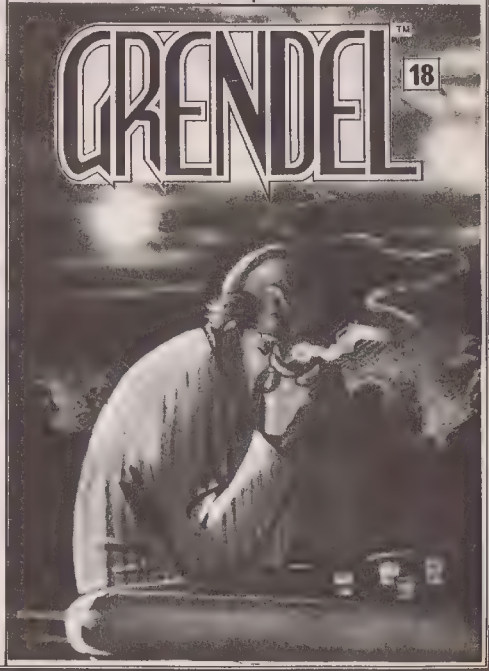
One of Comico's more enjoyable successes was the ***Gumby's Summertime Special*** by Bob Burden and ART Adams. Another book, tentatively titled ***Gumby's Winterime Special,*** is in the works. The follow-up again features art by ART Adams, with a script by Steve Purcell. It has been tentatively scheduled for a December release.

By far, Comico's best animation adaptation was the recent deluxe format ***Space Ghost*** comic by Mark Evanier, Steve Rude, Willie Blyberg and Ken Steacy. A followup is in the works, but isn't expected for some time due to Steve Rude's regular book, ***Nexus*** from First Comics. The next special won't be out before 1989.

Schreck concludes: "I'd like to encourage everyone out there who is interested in comics and reading comics to take a good long look at the racks. There's a lot of great stuff available form a lot of publishers. Some of these companies may not have huge corporations backing them, but they have good eyes and they publish some beautiful stuff. I hope that as time goes by that more people will start to buy comics from more than one or two companies. If people could do that it would make the whole comics industry healthier and I think that they'd be a lot happier with what they're reading."

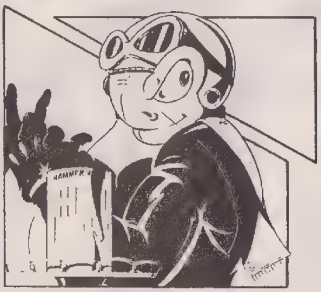
HOT PICKS AT COMICO

Much of Comico's line are tie-ins. So if you fondly remember the old show, or are a fan of the new ***Jonny Quest*** animated series, then you certainly can't go wrong checking out this series. Especially recommended is the ***Jonny Quest Classics*** series that Comico did last year. It's a three-issue series painted by Doug Wildey and is excellent. If you are a fan of Japanese manga and animation, then the ***Robotech*** series comes recommended. Theres also a ***Robotech***



Comico

graphic novel that is quite good. The big exception is the ***Space Ghost*** and ***Gumby's Summertime Special*** specials that Comico produced a few months back. The ***Space Ghost*** is a virtually perfect adaptation, from the fun Mark Evanier script, to the outstanding art by Steve Rude and Willie Blyberg and the amazing airbrush colors by Ken Steacy. This is one of the best things Comico has ever produced and, in fact, is one of the best comics that **anyone** has produced in the last few years. The ***Gumby Special*** by ***Flaming Carrot*** creator Bob Burden with outstanding art by fan favorite Art Adams is also excellent and more fun than a barrel of space pirates.



As for their ongoing series, ***Elementals*** should appeal to fans of superhero team books. Willingham is a bit inconsistent at times, but it is among the better team comics from the independent publishers.

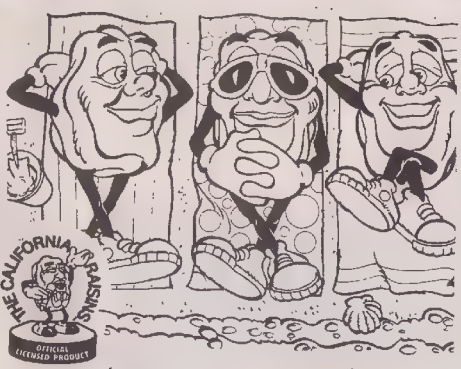
Mage is probably the best ongoing series that Comico has. It certainly made a name for creator Matt Wagner, who continues to write the series. It is of a black comedy at times, certainly offbeat. But the book has a lot of character and imagination. It isn't for everyone, but if you're looking for something new and different this could well be your cup of tea.

The same goes for Wagner's other creation, ***Grendel***. The quality isn't as consistent on this one, but it is still an above-average effort.

Comico has produced a couple of truly outstanding graphic novels. The first is ***Ginger Fox*** by Mike Baron and Mitch O'Connell. It is very much reminiscent of Modesty Blaze and is highly recommended. The other is a Western adventure, ***Rio*** by Wildey. The writing is great and the art is one of the best in the field.

Blackthorne

To get the full history of Blackthorne Publishing one must first start with another company, Pacific Comics. As Blackthorne publisher Steve Schanes explains: "My brother, Bill, and I ran Pacific Comics for about 13 years. Pacific was the first publisher other than Marvel and DC to offer regular color comics to the direct market. These were ***Captain Victory*** by Jack Kirby ***Starslayer*** by Mike Grell and ***Groo*** by Sergio Aragonez."



Despite a strong line up it was only two years from when Pacific Comics entered the color comics market to when the company went under, in 1983. Schanes explains, "Pacific had several arms of activity. It was not only a publisher but a distributor as well. What happened was that Pacific made money as a publisher but lost money as a distributor. As it was all under one corporation, the distribution losses exceeded the profits it made a a publisher. So when Pacific folded, Bill went to work for Diamond Distribution and I started Blackthorne. Pacific had at one point 75 staffers and 250 freelancers. Blackthorne has six staffers and around 75 freelancers, so this is a much more controlled environment. We're much more responsive to market conditions.

In creative terms, the market has shifted considerably since 1983. With Pacific there were far fewer publishers. There were maybe six publishers doing monthly titles in any quantity. Now there are more like 50 publishers out there. So Blackthorne has evolved into more of a novelty publisher. We find that we're much more successful when we fill gaps not filled by other publishers. We are virtually the only publisher continuing to do regular 3-D comics. We do very well at them and have monopolized that market segment. We don't do very well going up against marvel or DC on the superhero books. We also emphasize the licensed products like the ***GI JOE, Transformers*** and ***California Raisins.*** These books sell very well in many stores inside and outside the comics industry."

Schanes continues, "Blackthorne had very little financing initially so we started off publishing a line of trade paperback reprints of classic comic strips like ***Dick Tracey, Boners Arc, Brenda Starr, Annie*** and ***Gasoline Alley.*** That established a

Blackthorne

reputation for the company and a nice market segment. About a year and a half later we started creating new titles. Fortunately, that was when the black & white comics market boomed." Blackthorne took advantage of the boom as much as any other publisher, issuing dozens of new titles and one shots in 1985 and 1986.

Currently, Blackthorne continues collecting the ***Dick Tracey*** comic strips in a variety of formats. There is the ***Dick Tracey Weekly*** $2.00 comic. There are also several larger edition collections available including ***Dick Tracey: The Unprinted Stories, Dick Tracey: The Early Years*** and another 20 assorted ***Dick Tracey*** collections available for Blackthorne.

Two new black & white series from Blackthorne are the ***Battlebeasts*** a toy tie-in with Hasbro, and ***The Werewolf*** based on the Fox television series. There are also a number of movie tie-ins planned.

"Our best selling title has been the 3-D ***California Raisins*** comic. There are over 100 licensed products that tie in with the popular claymation characters, and the comic is sold along with towels, T-shirts and mugs in over 5,000 gift and toy stores across America."

New 3-D releases include a ***Richie Rich*** 3-D comic and a 3-D ***Star Wars*** comic. "Disneyland is carrying the ***Star Wars*** comic." says Schanes. "we're also adapting a 3-D ***Red Sonja, Solomon Kane*** and ***Kull***. We also have a special series planned for this year to tie into the presidential campaign. We'll have a ***Bullwinkle vs. Bozo*** comic where fan can vote for either Bullwinkle or Bozo for president. We're having great success selling our comics through the shops, but in the gift and toy market as well. We're constantly exploring new and different distribution for our comics. We have books available in several gymnasiums, in the gift shops at pro golf stores and ski resorts, a lot of airports carry our comics."

Blackthorne is different from the other comic companies in another unusual way as well. "We produce props for television and movies. We've created specialized comics for these movies that tie into the plot. These are comics that don't exist, never existed before, and are created for the film or television program by Blackthorne. We produced two comic books used in a recent film, ***Ruskies*** and for ***The Lost Boys***. We created two comics for ***The Lost Boys***. One was called ***Vampires Everywhere*** and another was called ***Destroy All Vampires***. These were read by characters in the film. We created 50 copies of one and 70 copies of the other. These were full color comics. We had ten working days to create two comics used in the film. We worked 24-hour shifts for about ten days straight and put the comics on a first class airlines seat where they arrived just in time for he shooting. For ***Ruskies*** we created six different comic books. The story is about a Russian sailor who gets lost in Florida. These young boys capture him and decide he's a 'commie' and used these comics, ***Sgt. Slammer's Guide to Interrogation*** and ***Sgt. Slammers First Aid Guide*** in the movie to interrogate him."

Another area relating to Hollywood that Blackthorne has had some success with its the licensing of some of its characters. We have options for Saturday morning cartoons on ***Nervous Rex, Crow of the Bear Clan Alien Ducklings*** and ***Laffin' Gas***. One of our upcoming Time Line projects, ***The Scorpio*** has also been optioned for television.

Blackthorne will be issuing their Timeline books as a series of $5.95 graphic novels. There will be two a month, starting in March. Scheduled for the first few months are ***Bringers*** by Bob Ingersol and Dante Fugea, ***Darkling*** by Mark Lin Harris and Chris Miller. There will be three ***Jack Hunter*** graphic novels by Bruce Jones.

HOT PICKS AT BLACKTHORNE

As most of Blackthorne's line is licensed products, it pretty much goes to say that if you are a big fan of ***The Flinstones*** or ***Star Wars*** or ***The California Raisins*** then you should enjoy those comics. The ***Dick Tracey*** material is well presented and is highly recommended to ***Dick Tracey*** fans. None of the material for the Time Line graphic novel series was available for review at presstime.

Independents

HOT PICKS FROM THE INDEPENDENTS

There are dozens of independent companies in the comics field that are publishing just a few books; while there isn't enough room in this ***Comic Shop News Collectors' Guide*** to give a full history and overview of every company, we can give you some hot picks from the various companies.

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

Cerebus remains A-V's hot title—in fact, it's the company's only title. Cerebus is a complex, sophisticated story that is sometimes hard for the new reader to get involved with--but it's one of the hottest of all independent titles.

AIRCEL

Warlock 5 is a very hot title for Aircel; this well-written, well-drawn book is a sophisticated fantasy adventure. Elflord remains a very strong seller for Aircel as well; this is one of the first hot independents from the summer of 1986--and one of the few to hold its popularity even now

APPLE COMICS

Without a doubt, one of the hottest of all independent comics is ***Elfquest: Siege at Blue Mountain.*** Few comics have developed the avid following ***Elfquest*** has built up over the past decade-and-a-half, and this new ***Elfquest*** series is a real fan favorite. Another Apple title, ***Vietnam Journal,*** is very hot among fans of ***The Nam*** and fans of mature, well-written war comics.

ARCHIE COMICS

Archie is about to unleash one of the hottest comics in recent years: ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1,*** a newsstand version of the famous Eastman-and-Laird turtles that have been a hot-comics phenomenon for several years now.

ARROW COMICS

The Realm is a very hot fantasy title; according to fantasy fans, this is one of the best grand fantasy series published in comics today. If you're into Tolkeinian fantasy, give this one some attention.

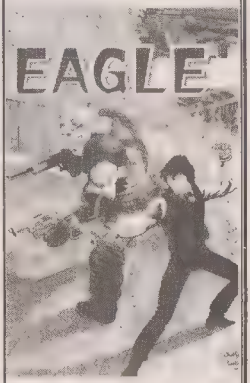
COMICS INTERVIEW

MICRA is by far the hottest title Comics Interview has; this sophisticated story of a woman living through her android body is very, very popular, largely due to the excellent stories by Lamar Waldron and the slick, stylish artwork by Ted Boonthanakhit.

Comics Interview has one other hot title, ***X-Thieves,*** which is a story of a pair of roguish time-travelling thieves; this is a clever, witty book that refuses to take itself too seriously.

CONTINUITY

It seems incredible that Neal Adams, the hottest name in comics almost two decades ago, still manages to be one of the hottest artists in the field, but he is. ***Samuree,*** the adventures of a female martial-arts expert, is a hot seller; Continuity's upcoming ***Captain Power,*** which Adams describes as "a first class comic," also looks likely to be hot.



CRYSTAL

Eagle is a martial-arts book that has remained very hot in spite of the large numbers of martial-arts books on the marketplace. The well-written stories are responsible for this book's strong following; it's more than just a martial arts comic.

EASTERN COMICS

Demon Warrior is a very hot seller among the manga fans; this is a well-done Oriental fantasy series.

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment's ***Man From UNCLE*** is

Independents

hot with fans of the old espionage series from the '60s; the book is very faithful in spirit to the original series, although updated to present times.

FANTAGOR

Fantagor specializes in Richard Corben books; of all their books, it looks that the hottest will be the upcoming ***Den*** series. Corben's Den was very popular years ago; the publication of all-new ***Den*** stories for a general audience is certainly a comics event to make note of.

FISHWRAP PRODUCTIONS

Fish Police is another hot black-and-white that kept its audience–and in fact, this title has become even more hot as time has passed. This is a witty mystery/hardboiled detective story in an aquatic setting--you gotta read it to understand just why it's so very popular.

HERO COMICS

Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt is a hot title from Hero; Roy Thomas and Dell Barras have developed quite a following for this father-and-son hero strip.

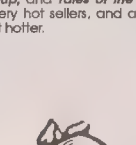
MAD DOG

Retief is Mad Dog's hottest title, and deservedly so; Jan Strnad and

Dennis Fujitake have captured all the humor and wit that make Keith Laumer's Retief stories truly memorable sf adventures, and their love for the source material certainly shows. ***Eddy Current*** is also a hot title for Mad Dog--this one is particularly popular with an older crowd.

MIRAGE

Is there anything hotter than the ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles?*** It seems doubtfull With the success of the animated series and the toy line, it looks like the hardshell heroes are hotter than ever before. All three of Mirage's Turtles titles–***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Turtle Soup,*** and ***Tales of the Turtles***–are very hot sellers, and are likely to get hotter.



MANUSCRIPT PRESS

Under new editor Tony Tollin, ***Comics Revue*** has become very hot with strip fans because it's coming out on time and is carrying a superb mix of some of the best humor and adventure strips available.

NBM

Look for NBM's upcoming ***Silent Invasion*** graphic album, published in collaboration with Renegade Press, to be very hot; the original ***Silent Invasion*** series was a hot seller for Renegade and quickly became a hip cult favorite.

NEW

Young Master is a very hot martial arts book done by some outstanding names in American comics: Larry Hama and Val Mayerik. The reprinted material is relatively unknown and hard-to-find, but it's having no trouble finding an enthusiastic audience in today's marketplace.

NICOTAT

Boris the Bear is another hot independent from the black-and-white era of 1986 that never cooled off; this witty, clever comic has moved from satire and parody to more serious adventures, but it remains very popular.

WE KNOW WHAT'S

HOT!

If you're looking to find out what's hot, what's happening, or just what's good in comics nowadays, no one can keep you better informed than ***Comic Shop News***.

Collectors rely on ***Comic Shop News*** to keep them up-to-date, up-to-the-minute, on late-breaking news stories, on just what comics they can expect to see on the comics shops' shelves each week, and on what some of the biggest names in the comics field are doing.

Each month, ***Comic Shop News*** gives you a special look at hot comics, interviews, reviews, question and answer, checklists, and (of course) news. No other comics publication runs a wider variety of news from ***all*** the comics companies than ***Comic Shop News***.

A new issue of ***Comic Shop News*** is available each week. You can't subscribe, though: the only way you can get it is by picking it up at your local comics shop. If you don't see it, ask for it!

Comic Shop News

Serving over 50,000 readers weekly

Independents

QUALITY

This company specializes in British reprints, and they have some very hot properties indeed. ***Judge Dredd*** retains a very avid following here in the States, and remains the company's hottest title. Almost as hot is ***The Ballad of Halo Jones***, an Alan-Moore-written strip that Moore fans can't get enough of. Another Alan Moore title, ***Time Twisters***, collects some of Moore's non-series shorter comics stories done for the British market--because of Moore, it, too, is very, very hot.

RENEGADE

Ms. Tree is extremely hot for Renegade; this is one of the best-written mystery books published, and while many readers wish there were more ***Ms. Tree*** pages, the backup features are entertaining as well.

RUSS COCHRAN

Russ Cochran's ***EC Classics*** series offers a very high-quality, affordable package that allows the new fan to find out just why EC is still so fondly remembered today. While the inexpensive ***Classics*** reprints are very hot, the more expensive EC hardcover reprints have quite a following on their own--and the high-quality full-color ***Mad*** reprints in particular were very hot sellers last Christmas season.

SLAVE LABOR

Fans of off-the-wall humor have made ***Suburban High Life*** a very hot cult favorite; this is zany, off-beat humor that should make you laugh out loud at least once every issue.

SPOTLIGHT

This company specializes in humor and animation-tie-in titles, and their hottest is still ***Mighty Mouse***, a cartoon favorite for many years. Animation fans generally find their entire line to be quite well-done, however.

STEELDRAGON PRESS

Captain Confederacy is hot because it's a mature, thought-provoking look at an alternate reality in which the South won the Civil War and became an independent country. Captain Confederacy is a hero who has decided that the ideals he was trained to represent are no longer the ideals he can support. Will Shetterly's writing makes this a very hot comic among those who like some thought in their reading.

THOUGHTS AND IMAGES

Albedo is perhaps the hottest of all the "anthropomorphic" titles (books that use animals in human-like roles as main characters); it's one of the first, one of the best-illustrated, and one of the most complex, so the fact that it remains very hot is no real surprise.

TRIAD

The Honeymooners is a very hot comic--but then, The Honeymooners is still a very hot syndicated television show, so that's no surprise. Triad's adaptation of the series is very faithful--which is why the fans are so very pleased with it.

TRU STUDIOS

Trollords is another hot black-and-white that refuses to cool down; this misadventures of these three stooge-like trolls has a very avid following, and the book continues to increase in popularity.

VORTEX

This Canadian company has one very hot title on the stands right now--***Mr. X***, a hip, somewhat surreal comic that appeals to readers who've grown tired of superheroes and are ready for something more sophisticated. Meanwhile, on the horizon for Vortex is another very hot book for the summer--***Black Kiss***, Howard Chaykin's "erotic horror comic" that has aroused so much curiosity in the industry.

This only begins to touch the surface of the independent comics industry; for every company we were able to mention here, there are at least four other companies out there on the comics racks, shooting for the next hot comics success. Odds are that some of them are going to make it, too. That's one of the best things about comics collecting--it's possible for anyone with a good idea, a lot of talent, and a little luck to have the year's comics success story.

SUPER SERIES™

TOTAL ECLIPSE™

Total Eclipse, Valkyrie, Skywolf, The Inside TM Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. Airboy & Eclipse Enterprises, Inc.
Miracleman ® Eclipse Enterprises, Inc./Alan Moore. Aztec Ace TM Doug Moench. Strike! TM Chaos! Lyle
Prowler TM Roman Dirge/Pirate Slice TM Brooke Fry. All © 1988 Slan Wisch.

"Starring"

Airboy
Aztec Ace
Liberty Project
Masked Man
Miracleman

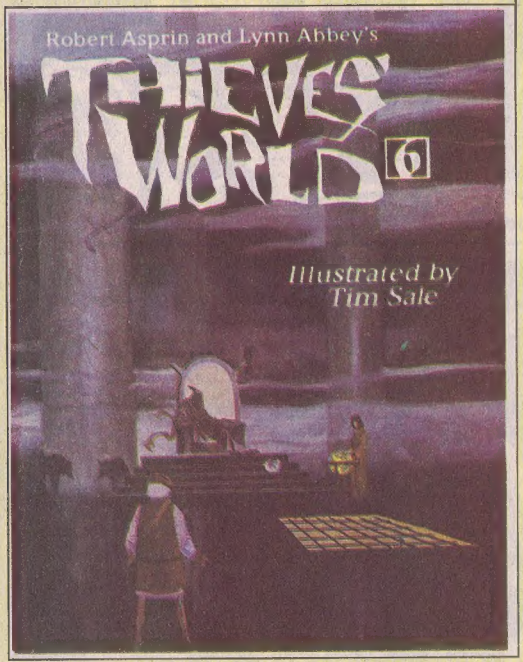
The New Wave
Prowler
Valkyrie
Skywolf
Strike!

and Introducing Zzed

WOLFMAN
HAMPTON BLYBERG
SIENKIEWICZ

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: B.C. Boyer • Kurt Busiek • Chuck Dixon
Michael T. Gilbert • Doug Moench • Alan Moore • Tim Truman

NEW THIS MONTH FROM STARBLAZE GRAPHICS



- 8½ x 11
- 64 pages
- Graphic novel (black and white)

Trade softcover
ISBN 0-89865-522-6
$4.95

WRITE FOR YOUR FREE STARBLAZE NEWSLETTER!

THE DONNING COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

5659 Virginia Beach Boulevard
Norfolk, Virginia 23502
1-800-446-8572

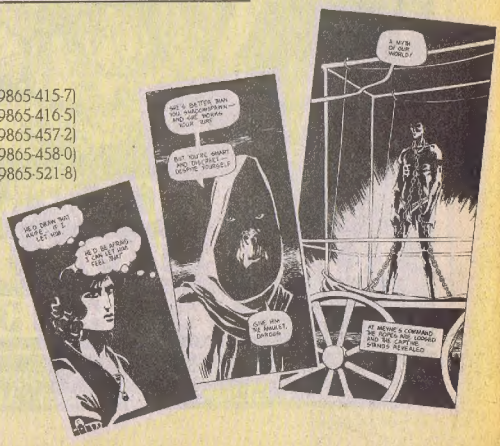
REORDER NOW!

Other titles in the series:

- Thieves' World Graphics 1 (ISBN 0-89865-415-7)
- Thieves' World Graphics 2 (ISBN 0-89865-416-5)
- Thieves' World Graphics 3 (ISBN 0-89865-457-2)
- Thieves' World Graphics 4 (ISBN 0-89865-458-0)
- Thieves' World Graphics 5 (ISBN 0-89865-521-8)
  8½" x 11", 72 pages,
  graphic novel (black and white)
  Trade softcover **$3.95**

Also...

- Thieves' World Graphics:
  The Color Volume 1
  8½" x 11", 184 pages,
  graphic novel (color)
  Trade softcover **$12.95**
  ISBN 0-89865-460-2


HE'S DRINK THAT ALWAYS GET HIM
HE'S DRUNK! I CAN LET HIM FEEL THAT!
HE'S A LITTLE DRUNK AND MISCHIEVOUS— AND HE WORKS FOR YOUR SON!
BUT YOU'RE SMART AND DELICIOUS— BESIDE YOURSELF!
GIVE HIM TO SMALLT, DARGON
A MYTH OF OUR WORLDS!
AT MEDUSE'S COMMAND, HE ROSE FROM THE LONGS AND SEA AND LONGS BINDS REVEALED